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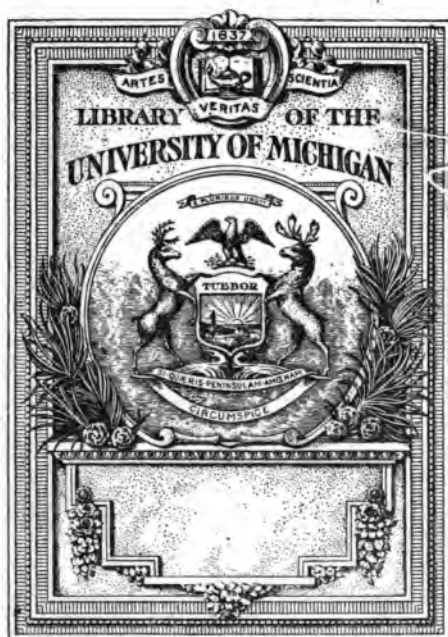
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The Betrothal

Maurice Maeterlinck



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T3

THE BETROTHAL
A SEQUEL TO THE BLUE BIRD

THE WORKS OF MAURICE MAETERLINCK

ESSAYS

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THE LIFE OF THE BEE
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THE LIGHT BEYOND

THE BETROTHAL

A SEQUEL TO THE BLUE BIRD

*A Fairy Play in Five Acts
and Eleven Scenes*

BY
MAURICE MAETERLINCK

Translated by
ALEXANDER TEIXEIRA DE MATTOS



NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
1918



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CHARACTERS

*(arranged in the order of their entrance
on the stage)*

TYLTYL

THE FAIRY BÉRYLUNE

MILETTE (*the Wood-cutter's Daughter*)

BELLINE (*the Butcher's Daughter*)

ROSELLE (*the Inn-keeper's Daughter*)

AIMETTE (*the Miller's Daughter*)

JALLINE (*the Beggar's Daughter*)

ROSARELLE (*the Mayor's Daughter*)

JOY (*the Veiled Girl, or the White Phantom*)

DESTINY

THE MISER

LIGHT

SOME USUAL THOUGHTS

GRANNY TYL

GAFFER TYL

Characters

THE GREAT MENDICANT

THE GREAT PEASANT

THE RICH ANCESTOR

THE SICK ANCESTOR

THE DRUNKEN ANCESTOR

THE MURDERER ANCESTOR

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

OTHER ANCESTORS

SOME OF TYLTYL'S "ME'S"

VARIOUS CHILDREN IN THE ABODE OF
THE CHILDREN

THE FIVE LITTLE ONES

THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL

MUMMY TYL

MYTYL

DADDY TYL

THE NEIGHBOUR

SCENES

ACT I

Scene

- 1 *The Wood-cutter's Cottage.*

ACT II

- 2 *Outside the Door.*
- 3 *The Miser's Cave.*
- 4 *A Closet in the Fairy's Palace.*
- 5 *A Ballroom in the Fairy's Palace.*

ACT III

- 6 *Before the Curtain representing
Rocks.*
- 7 *The Abode of the Ancestors.*

Scenes

ACT IV

- 8 *Before the Curtain representing the Milky Way.*
- 9 *The Abode of the Children.*

ACT V

- 10 *Before the Curtain representing the Edge of a Forest.*
- 11 *The Awakening.*

ACT I

THE BETROTHAL;
OR
THE BLUE BIRD CHOOSES

ACT I

SCENE I

The Wood-cutter's Cottage

The cottage-scene in The Blue Bird: the interior of a wood-cutter's cabin, simple and rustic in appearance, but in no way poverty-stricken. A recessed fireplace containing the dying embers of a wood-fire. Kitchen-utensils, a cupboard, a bread-pan, a grandfather's clock, a spinning-wheel, a water-tap, etc. A dog and a cat asleep. A large blue-and-white

The Betrothal;

sugar-loaf. On the wall hangs a round cage containing a blue bird. At the back, two windows with closed shutters. On the left is the front-door, with a big latch to it. A ladder leads up to a loft. But there is only one bed, TYLTYL'S; he is now sixteen years of age. It is dark; the scene is lit only by a few moonbeams which filter through the shutters. TYLTYL is sound asleep.

(A knock at the door.)

TYLTYL

(Waking with a start.) Who's there?
(Another knock.) Wait till I put on my breeches. The door's bolted. I'll come and open it.

THE FAIRY

(Behind the door.) Don't trouble,

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

don't trouble! . . . It's only me! . . .
How do you do? (*The door has opened
of its own accord and THE FAIRY BÉRY-
LUNE enters under the guise of an old
woman, as in the first scene of the Blue
Bird. At the same time the room is filled
with a strange brightness, which remains
after the door is closed again.*)

TYLTYL

(*In surprise.*) Who are you?

THE FAIRY

Don't you know me? Why, Tyltyl, it's
hardly seven years since we said good-bye
to each other!

TYLTYL

(*Bewildered and vainly searching his
memory.*) Yes, yes, I remember . . .
and I know what you mean. . . .

THE FAIRY

Yes, but you don't quite grasp who I

The Betrothal;

am and you don't remember anything at all. You haven't changed, I see: just the same careless, ungrateful, wool-gathering little fellow that you always were! . . . But you have grown taller and stronger, my lad, and quite handsome! If I were not a fairy, I should never have known you! Yes, really quite handsome! . . . But are you aware of it? It doesn't seem to have occurred to you!

TYLTYL

We only had one tiny looking-glass in the house, about as big as your hand. Mytyl took it and keeps it in her room.

THE FAIRY

So Mytyl has a room of her own now?

TYLTYL

Yes, she sleeps next door, under the stairs, and I here, in the kitchen. Shall I wake her?

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

THE FAIRY

(*Growing suddenly and unreasonably angry, as on her former visit.*) There's no need to do anything of the sort! . . . I have nothing to do with her; her hour has not struck; and, when it does I shall be quite capable of finding her, without being shown the way as though I were blind! . . . In the meantime, I want nobody's advice. . . .

TYLTYL

(*In dismay.*) But ma'am, I didn't know . . .

THE FAIRY

That will do. . . . (*Recovering her temper as suddenly as she lost it.*) By the way, how old are you?

TYLTYL

I shall be sixteen a fortnight after Epiphany.

The Betrothal;

THE FAIRY

(*Growing angry again.*) A fortnight after Epiphany! . . . What a way of reckoning! . . . And here am I without my almanack, having left it with Destiny last time I called on him, fifty years ago! . . . I don't know where I stand. . . . However, never mind: I'll make the calculation when we see him, for we shall have to get it exactly right. . . . And what have you been doing these seven years since we met?

TYLTYL

I have been working in the forest with daddy.

THE FAIRY

That means you've been helping him cut down trees. I don't like that very much. You call that working, do you? Ah, well, men evidently can't live without destroying the last things of beauty that remain on the

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

earth! . . . So let's talk of something else. . . . (*Mysteriously.*) Can any one hear us?

TYLTYL

I don't think so.

THE FAIRY

(*Growing angry once more.*) It doesn't matter what you think, but whether you're sure. What I have to say is tremendously important . . . and strictly private. Come here, quite close, so that I can whisper it. . . . Whom are you in love with?

TYLTYL

(*In amazement.*) Whom am I in love with?

THE FAIRY

(*Still cross and quite forgetting the importance of speaking in a low voice.*) Yes, yes! I'm not talking Greek, am I?

The Betrothal;

I want to know if you're in love with any one.

TYLTYL

Yes, certainly; I love everybody: my parents, my friends, my sister, my neighbours, all the people I know.

THE FAIRY

Now oblige me and don't play the fool. . . . You know perfectly well what I mean. . . . I'm asking whether there's any one girl among those you meet whom you love more than the rest.

TYLTYL

(*Blushing and considering.*) I don't know. . . .

THE FAIRY

(*Angrier than ever.*) What do you mean, you don't know? Who does know, if you don't? At your age a boy ought to think of nothing else: if he doesn't, he's

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

a booby, a nincompoop and not worth bothering about! . . . There's nothing to blush at: it's when one's not in love that one should feel ashamed. . . . You and I are miles away just now from the falsehood of words: we are with the truth of our thoughts, which is a very different thing. . . . Come, among all the girls you've met . . .

TYLTYL

(*Timidly.*) I don't meet very many. . . .

THE FAIRY

That's no reason; it's not necessary to meet them by the dozen. Very often it's enough if you come across just one: when you've nobody else, you love that one and are not to be pitied. . . . But come, among those close by . . .

TYLTYL

There aren't any close by. . . .

The Betrothal;

THE FAIRY

There are at the neighbours'.

TYLTYL

There are hardly any neighbours. . . .

THE FAIRY

There are girls in the village, in the town, way back in the forest and in every house. You find them everywhere when your heart's awake. . . . Which is the prettiest?

TYLTYL

Well, they're all very pretty.

THE FAIRY

How many do you know?

TYLTYL

Four in the village, one in the forest and one by the bridge.

THE FAIRY

Oho! That's not bad, for a beginning!

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

TYLTYL

We don't see many people here, you know.

THE FAIRY

You're not the baby one would think.
. . . But tell me, between ourselves, do they love you too?

TYLTYL

They haven't told me so; they don't know that I love them.

THE FAIRY

But these are things which it isn't necessary to know or to tell! . . . You see that at once when you're living in the truth. A look is enough; there's no mistaking it; and the words which people say merely hide the real ones which the heart has spoken. . . . But I'm in a hurry: would you like me to make them come here?

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

(*Terrified.*) Make them come here? They wouldn't want to! They hardly know me. They know I'm poor. They don't know where I live, especially those in the village: they never come this way. . . . It's an hour's walk from the church to the house; the roads are bad; it's dark. . . .

THE FAIRY

Dear, dear, anything more? Don't let us talk about that. Remember, we've done with untruths. I've only to lift my finger and they'll come. . . .

TYLTYL

But I'm not even sure that they've noticed me at all.

THE FAIRY

Have you looked at them?

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

TYLTYL

Yes, sometimes. . . .

THE FAIRY

And have they looked back at you?

TYLTYL

Yes, sometimes. . . .

THE FAIRY

Well, that's enough; that's the truth;
and one doesn't need anything more.
You'll find that's the way people tell each
other in the world where I'm going to
take you, the world of real things. The
rest doesn't matter. . . . They make no
mistake. You'll see, once we are there,
how well they know all that has to be
known; for what we see is nothing: (it is
what we do not see that makes the world
go round.) . . . And now, watch me! . . .
I'm taking the little green hat out of my
bag again! . . . Do you remember it?

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

Yes, but it's bigger. . . .

THE FAIRY

(*Angrily.*) Of course it's bigger!
So's your head: they grew up together.
. . . Always making those unnecessary
remarks! . . .

TYLTYL

And the diamond has changed colour.
I should call it blue. . . .

THE FAIRY

But, you see, it isn't the diamond! This
time we're not concerned with the souls
of Bread, Sugar and other simple and
unimportant things. We have to choose
the great and only love of your life; for
each man has only one. If he misses it,
he wanders miserably over the face of the

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

earth. The search goes on till he dies, with the great duty unfulfilled which he owes to all those who are within him. But he seldom has an idea of this. He walks along, his eyes shut; seizes some woman whom he chances to meet in the dark; and shows her to his friends as proudly as though the gates of Paradise were opening. He fancies himself alone in the world and imagines that in his own heart all things begin and end. . . . Which is absurd. . . . But no more of that! Is everything ready? Put on your hat and turn the sapphire; then they'll come in. . . .

TYLTYL

'(*Scared.*) But I'm not dressed! . . . Wait, wait! . . . What shall I put on? . . . Oh, what luck! . . . There are my Sunday clothes on the chair: my breeches

The Betrothal;

— they're almost new — and my clean shirt! . . . (*He dresses hurriedly.*)

THE FAIRY

Come, come, have done! All this doesn't matter; they won't mind your clothes. . . . You're not going to meet a lot of silly children. You won't find them the same as they were in the other life, because this is the real one; and it's the truth in them that you'll see here.

TYLTYL

(*Very uneasy.*) Will they all come in together? There are six of them, at least: I can't remember. . . . Suppose they started quarrelling and pulling one another's hair?

THE FAIRY

Just the least bit conceited, aren't you?

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

TYLTYL

No, but I'm afraid of their making a noise, because of daddy.

THE FAIRY

Haven't I told you again and again, we're no longer in the world below! . . . Can't you feel that the air is much purer and the light quite different? . . . We are now in a sphere in which men and women don't quarrel or wish one another harm. All of that was merely make-believe and doesn't exist deep down. . . . If some of them are unhappy because you hesitate in your choice, they will none the less hope on until the end; and they know very well that (where there is love there must also be sorrow.) . . .

TYLTYL

How will they come in?

The Betrothal;

THE FAIRY

Upon my word, I don't know. Each of them will do what occurs to her: one will choose the window, another the roof, the wall, the cellar or the chimney . . . one or two even will come in by the door; but those are the least interesting: they lack imagination. . . . However, we shall see when the time comes. We've talked enough; time presses; come, turn the sapphire. . . .

TYLTYL

(*Trying to gain time, in order to conceal his terror.*) Which way round am I to turn it?

THE FAIRY

The same as with the diamond, from right to left. . . . (*Looking at TYLTYL.*) Goodness me, how pale you are! . . .

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

What has come over you? Surely you're not afraid? . . .

TYLTYL

Not at all, on the contrary. . . . I always look like this. . . .

THE FAIRY

You needn't be ashamed to admit it: this is a very serious moment; and, if men knew what happened, in this life and all the others, when they made a bad choice, they'd never dare to get married at all. . . . But what you're trying to do is to put off the dreadful moment; and I'm a goose to be listening to you. . . . Come, turn the sapphire!

(TYLTYL turns the sapphire. No sooner has he done so than the cottage is filled with a supernatural light, which invests all things with beauty, purity and a transcendent

The Betrothal;

joy. A window opens noiselessly and a young girl, dressed like a wood-cutter and carrying a hatchet in her hand, steps into the room and runs up and kisses TYLTYL.)

THE GIRL

Good evening, Tytyl! . . . You called me: here I am! . . .

TYLTYL

Hullo, it's Milette! . . . (*To THE FAIRY.*) This is Milette, my cousin, the daughter of Feltree, the wood-cutter. . . . We see each other sometimes in the forest. . . . (*To MILETTE.*) So you loved me? . . . You never said so! . . .

MILETTE

Do people say such things in a life where everything is forbidden? Need they say them? . . . But I knew at once

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

and from the first that you loved me; and so did I love you. . . . It was one evening when you went past with your father. You were carrying a bundle of laurel-twigs. You didn't know my name then and said, "Good evening," and looked into my eyes. I answered, "Good night," and cast my eyes down; but I had that look of yours in my heart; and, since then, without leaving home, I've been here very often; but you didn't seem to know. . . .

TYLTYL

No, no, it's I who every evening after sunset used to go to you. I was never at home. Mummy would ask, "What are you thinking of, Tyltyl?" And daddy answered, "He's up in the moon again!" I wasn't in the moon at all, I was with you; but you paid no attention: you were seeing to the fire, or the soup, or the rab-

The Betrothal;

bits; you were cutting chips or tying up bundles, as if no one had entered your cottage. . .

MILETTE

No, I was here and kissing you all the time; but you didn't kiss me. . . .

TYLTYL

I tell you it was I who was always kissing you; I tell you it was you who were never there. . . .

MILETTE

It's funny that we can never see things till we've learnt how to look for them. . . . But, now that we do know, now that we see, we can really kiss each other. . . .

TYLTYL

(*Eagerly kissing* MILETTE.) Yes, yes, let's kiss each other again and again till we have no kisses left! . . . Oh, how

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

wonderful it is! . . . I never kissed anybody till now; and I'd no idea what it was like! . . . Oh, how wonderful, how wonderful! . . . I could kiss you for ever! I could spend my life kissing you! . . .

MILETTE

And I, I too! . . . I'd never kissed anybody either: I mean, I'd only kissed daddy and mummy; it's not the same thing at all. . . . But tell me, Tytyl, is it true that you love me and only me? . . . Who is that coming in?

(Opening the wall, which closes again behind her, enter a second young girl, dressed in a blood-red skirt and bodice. A butcher's knife hangs from her belt.)

THE SECOND GIRL

(Rushing up to TYLYL and kissing

The Betrothal;

him.) Here I am, Tytyl darling, here I am!

TYLTYL

(*To THE FAIRY.*) This is Belline, my cousin, the butcher's daughter. . . . (*To BELLINE.*) What's the matter with you, Belline dear? You're wet through and quite out of breath! . . .

BELLINE

I should think I was! . . . It's a long way from the village to your place! . . . I didn't even wait to wash my hands. . . . I was helping daddy to cut up a calf; the moment your thoughts came, I dropped my knife and left everything so as to get here quicker. . . . I even believe that, while I was there, I cut my finger rather badly; but here it doesn't show. . . . Daddy hasn't the least idea what has happened; he must be furious. (*Catching*

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

sight of MILETTE.) How do you do, Milette?

MILETTE

How do you do, Belline? . . . Do you love him too?

BELLINE

Why, yes, of course! . . . You're not angry with me?

MILETTE

Not at all, I'm glad. . . . We'll both of us love him. . . .

BELLINE

How pretty you look this evening, Milette dearest. . . .

MILETTE

No, it's you, Belline: you've never been more beautiful. . . .

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

(*To THE FAIRY.*) They're taking it very well! . . .

THE FAIRY

Of course they are; they know it's not your fault. . . .

(At this point, the chimney-recess lights up, opens at the back and admits a third young girl, dressed like the maid at an inn and carrying a pewter tray under one arm and a bottle under the other.)

THE THIRD GIRL

(Enthusiastically, darting at TYLTYL.)
Here I am, here I am! It's me! . . .
Good evening, everybody; but first a kiss for Tyltyl! . . .

TYLTYL

Hullo, you too, Roselle? . . . (*To*

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

THE FAIRY.) This is Roselle, the daughter of the landlord of the Golden Sun. . . . (To ROSELLE.) Was there no one at the inn this evening, that you were able to come?

ROSELLE

On the contrary, heaps of people! You can imagine, on Christmas Eve! There were men sitting and drinking on the counter and on all the window-sills. I dropped a tray with twelve glasses on it when you called me. Why, I've still got the tray under this arm and a bottle of the best brandy under the other. It gets in my way when I'm kissing you. . . . I left them shouting after me, down there, as though I had set the house on fire. . . . They must be wondering if I'm mad. But I don't care, I was so delighted that you were thinking of me. A sudden happiness came over me. . . . How are

The Betrothal;

you, Tytyl dear? . . . Kiss me again!
. . . You're even handsomer than when
I saw you last. . . .

TYLTYL

(*Kissing her.*) And you, dear Roselle,
you are prettier than ever; and your cheeks
are so soft and cool. . . . I never dared
kiss you before. . . . When any one else
did, I always said to myself, "How happy
he must be!"

ROSELLE

The others didn't matter. . . . But I
knew well enough that you didn't dare.
. . . I didn't dare either, though I was dy-
ing to kiss you. . . . Do you remember
the first time you came to the inn, six weeks
ago? It was on a Sunday morning, after
High Mass; you didn't look at anybody;
but suddenly, when I came near, your eyes
grew so bright and opened so wide . . .

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

TYLTYL

And so did yours open wide : they looked
like two lakes.

ROSELLE

What were they doing, our eyes?
What happened? . . . I know that, since
that day, I think of nothing but you, I do
no work, I'm always here; but you came
very seldom. . . .

*(Coming down the ladder from the
attic, enter a fourth young girl, in
rustic clothes, all white with flour.)*

TYLTYL

(Turning round.) Who's there? You,
Aimette? . . . *(To THE FAIRY.)* This
is Aimette, another cousin, the miller's
daughter. . . .

THE FAIRY

Go on, go on, you're doing very nicely!

The Betrothal;

AIMETTE

(*A little shyly.*) I came as I was, from the mill. I've not had time to brush myself.

TYLTYL

That doesn't matter. Kiss me all the same. How fresh and rosy you are, underneath all that flour! . . .

AIMETTE

I shall never dare. . . . You'd be covered with it. . . .

(She has hardly finished speaking when, through the other window, enter a fifth young girl, bare-foot, bare-headed, clad in rags and carrying in her hand a wooden bowl with a few halfpence clinking in it. She does not dare come forward.)

TYLTYL

One more! . . . (To THE FAIRY.)

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

This is Jalline, the little beggar-girl from the bridge by the Hermitage.

THE FAIRY

Excellent, excellent! . . . I'd better wake your father and tell him the house won't be big enough; then he can start building at once. . . .

TYLTYL

But it's not my fault. I didn't do it on purpose. One can't help loving them! . . . How are you, Jalline? . . . What have you done with your poor old father?

JALLINE

I left him at the bridge.

TYLTYL

What, all alone in the dark! And he blind and a cripple! Isn't that very dangerous? . . .

The Betrothal;

JALLINE

(*On the verge of tears.*) Yes, I know it's wrong. It was very wrong of me, very. I won't do it again. But I couldn't help it, Tytyl, really. When you called me, I couldn't stay where I was.

TYLTYL

(*Kissing her.*) There, there, don't cry. I'll help you to bring him home. . . . Do you remember, I did that once before, one evening when I was crossing the bridge and gave you a halfpenny: it was all I had!

JALLINE

I've kept it ever since, Tytyl. I put it in a box. I shall never lose it.

TYLTYL

(*Kissing her again.*) Oh, the sweet smell of lavender and thyme! . . .

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

*(This time the door opens slowly.
Enter a sixth young girl. She is in
evening-dress, with a fur cloak over
her shoulders, and carries a fan in
her hand.)*

TYLTYL

Who is this?

THE FAIRY

But where do they all come from? At
your age too! I should never have be-
lieved it! . . .

TYLTYL

But I didn't know . . . (*To THE
FAIRY.*) Why, it's Rosarelle! . . . The
mayor's daughter! . . . You know, from
the great big farmhouse, with the three
round turrets, at the other end of the vil-
lage! . . . What shall I do? She's so
proud! . . .

The Betrothal;

THE FAIRY

Not a bit; she won't be any prouder than the others. Speak to her and you'll see. . . .

TYLTYL

I'll never dare. . . . What could I say? . . .

ROSARELLE

(*Coming forward.*) Well, Tytyl, don't you know me?

TYLTYL

Yes, miss, but I wasn't sure. . . .

ROSARELLE

Miss? What do you mean? That's not my name. My name's Rosarelle; and you know it. . . . There was a big dinner at my father's, for Christmas. Your thoughts came to fetch me while we were

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

at dessert. I jumped up at once and upset a glass of champagne. They were alarmed and thought I was ill and began to fuss: it was as much as I could do to get away. Still, here I am and I'm going to kiss you. . . . Do you remember how we used to look at each other when you came to the yard with your bundles of wood? . . .

TYLTYL

Oh, yes! You were so lovely, I couldn't take my eyes off you. . . . But you are lovelier than ever to-day.

ROSARELLE

That was the beginning; but I didn't quite realize it till the day you gave me the three little bullfinches which you found in the forest.

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

Yes, yes, I remember. . . . I knew too.
. . . Are they still alive?

ROSARELLE

Two of the little things are dead; but the third is splendid. . . . I keep him in a gilt cage, by the window; and each time he sings . . .

THE FAIRY

Come, come, these little confidences are most interesting, but we've no time to lose. Everything must be settled to-night, for an opportunity like this comes only once to a man; and woe to him who lets it slip: he will never have another chance! But what we have to do now is to put our heads together and prepare for the great choice, which is to decide the happiness of two human beings first and of many others after that.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

TYLTYL

(*Greatly perturbed.*) Must I make
my choice at once and can I only choose
one? . . .

THE FAIRY

Don't distress yourself; it's not your af-
fair; it's not you who'll choose. . . .

TYLTYL

(*Utterly bewildered.*) Not I who'll
choose? . . .

THE FAIRY

Why, no, it doesn't concern you.

TYLTYL

(*Completely stupefied.*) It doesn't con-
cern me? . . .

THE FAIRY

No, no, I told you so: of course it
doesn't.

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

(*Failing to understand a word.*) Then
I can't love whom I want to?

THE FAIRY

Why, no. . . . Nobody loves whom he
wants to or does what he wants to in this
world. You must first of all learn what
is wanted by those on whom you depend.

TYLTYL

By those on whom I depend? . . .

THE FAIRY

Why, yes: your ancestors, to begin with.

TYLTYL

My ancestors?

THE FAIRY

All those who have died before you.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

TYLTYL

What business is it of theirs, since they're dead? I don't know them.

THE FAIRY

I dare say not, but they know you. . . .
And then there are all your children.

TYLTYL

My children? What children? I've never had any!

THE FAIRY

Yes, yes, yes, you've had thousands who aren't born yet and who're waiting for the mother whom you're going to give them.

TYLTYL

Then it's they who will choose my bride?

THE FAIRY

Why, of course; that's how things al-

The Betrothal;

ways happen. . . . But let's have no more talk: we have to make a few preparations for the great journey; it's going to be rather long and tiring . . . And first we must get some money: I've none left at home; and my magic wand that brings it me is being repaired a few thousand miles down in the centre of the earth. . . . I don't quite see where we're to get what we want: the expenses will be quite heavy. . . . (*To THE GIRLS.*) Has any one of you a few thousand francs on her?

JALLINE

I've only sixpence halfpenny in my bowl, besides Tytyl's halfpenny, which I can't part with.

ROSELLE

I've seven francs fifty, to-night's takings.

MILETTE

I've nothing at all.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

ROSARELLE

I've nothing on me, but grandfather's very rich.

THE FAIRY

That's all right, it's all we need: he can lend us some money.

ROSARELLE

Yes, but he's a miser!

THE FAIRY

No, that's a mistake; there are no misers. Thanks to the sapphire which reveals the heart and essence of things, you will see that he is no more of a miser than you or I and that he will give us whatever we ask. That's the first visit we shall have to pay. . . . Well, are you all ready? Which way shall we go out?

(At this point, a trap-door opens, in the middle of the stage, and from it there rises slowly, like a tower,

The Betrothal;

a gigantic shape, twice a man's height. It is square, enormous, imposing and overwhelming; it gives the impression of a mass of granite and of immense, blind, inflexible force. Its face is not seen. It is draped in grey folds that are rigid as rock.)

THE SHAPE

It's I. You have forgotten me, as usual! . . .

TYLTYL

(Not a little frightened.) Who is this gentleman?

THE FAIRY

He's right, I had forgotten him. It's nobody, it's Destiny. I didn't foresee that the sapphire would make him visible also. He will have to come with us; we can't

or, The Blue Bird Chooses
prevent him; he's entitled to. Give him
your hand.

TYLTYL

Will he lead us?

THE FAIRY

That remains to be seen. We must
hear what Light says: it's a matter for her.

TYLTYL

Why, of course, Light! . . . Where is
she? . . . Isn't she going with us?

THE FAIRY

Yes, yes, but she has a great deal to do
at the moment . . . She wasn't free this
evening. . . . We shall find her at my
place, where we shall go straight from
your visit to the miser.

TYLTYL

How glad I shall be to see her again!
. . . She was so nice, so sweet, so beauti-
ful, so affectionate and kind! . . .

The Betrothal;

THE FAIRY

Come, give Destiny your hand; it's time to start.

(TYLTYL stretches out his arm to the monster, who grips the boy's little hand and wrist in his huge bronze-coloured hand.)

TYLTYL

Here you are, sir. . . . *(Giving a cry.)*
Hi! . . . It's not a hand, it's a steel vice! . . .

THE FAIRY

It's nothing, you'll get used to it. . . .
Come, is everything ready at last? Nothing more that we've forgotten? Then one, two, three and off we go! . . .

(A knock at the door.)

THE FAIRY

(Crossly.) Who's come to disturb us

or, The Blue Bird Chooses
now? Shall we never get out of this
hovel?

(Another knock.)

TYLTYL

Come in! . . .

(A third knock.)

TYLTYL

Who's there? . . . Come in, can't
you? . . .

*(The door opens slowly and reveals
a female form shrouded in long
white veils, like an antique statue.
The face, hands, mouth, eyes, hair
and eyebrows are lifeless and white
as marble. It stands motionless
on the threshold.)*

TYLTYL

What is it?

The Betrothal;

THE FAIRY

Really, I don't know. . . . It must be one of those whom you've forgotten. . . .

TYLTYL

(*Vainly ransacking his memory.*) I? . . . I've forgotten nobody. . . . I've never seen her before. . . . I can't remember. . . . (*Going up to THE VEILED FORM.*) Who are you? (*THE VEILED FORM does not reply.*)

THE FAIRY

It's no use asking her. She can't tell you, she can't come to life till you remember her.

TYLTYL

But I don't. I'm thinking and trying as hard as I can, but I can find nothing.

THE FAIRY

Very well, very well, we shall see later,

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

when everything is cleared up. . . . As she blocks the path, we must go out by the window. . . . Come, this way! We have taken our fate in our hands; and things have begun! . . .

DESTINY

Excuse me, excuse me! It's I who am Fate and it's I who begin and it's I who give orders. . . . I go first, for it is I who direct everything and I am the only master! . . .

(The windows open down to the ground and all go out into the starry night, preceded by DESTINY dragging TYLTYL by the hand. THE VEILED FORM follows them slowly, at a distance.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

ACT II

SCENE II

Outside the Door

The curtain represents a huge double door surmounted with a flattened arch. The door is old, thick and massive, unyielding, bound and studded with iron bars and nails. In the middle of the door is a formidable lock.

(Enter THE FAIRY and TYLTYL, who carries an empty wallet over his shoulder.)

THE FAIRY

This is the Miser's door.

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

Where are my sweethearts?

THE FAIRY

At home, in my palace; they'll wait there
for you and will be quite safe. . . . Be
quick and come back soon.

TYLTYL

What about Destiny? I thought he
would never leave me again?

THE FAIRY

That's true; it's curious. But it's not
our business to run after him; it's his own
affair; he's by no means indispensable.

TYLTYL

Are you coming with me to the Miser?

THE FAIRY

No, it's better that you should see him

or, The Blue Bird Chooses
alone. . . . You're not frightened, are
you?

TYLTYL

Not a bit; but I don't quite know what
I am to do.

THE FAIRY

It's very simple: when you're in there,
you turn the sapphire; and he'll give you
anything you want.

TYLTYL

He won't attack me? I've no weapons,
you know.

THE FAIRY

On the contrary, he will be delighted to
be of service.

TYLTYL

How shall I get in? There's no bell
and no knocker. Am I to tap at the door?

The Betrothal

THE FAIRY

Do nothing of the sort! That would be giving him a hint; and he would become unmanageable. . . . But this also is quite simple. I will touch the big lock with my wand; the doors will slide back to right and left; and you will suddenly be on the other side, that is to say, right inside the cave, before he even suspects it. Once there, you can keep quiet in your corner for a moment and watch him playing with his gold, if that amuses you; and it will amuse you, for it's rather curious. Then, when you've had enough, turn the sapphire. Get over there, on the left, against the wall of the arch, so that you can slip into his den at once, without making a noise. . . . Look out! The door will disappear! And I'll take myself off this way! . . . (*She touches the great lock with her wand.*)

SCENE III

The Miser's Cave

(The heavy doors open in the middle, slide right and left and disappear in the slips, revealing the whole of THE MISER'S den, an immense cave with low arches in which are piled large sacks bursting with gold, silver and copper coins. The only light comes from a wretched smoking candle. TYLTYL hides himself as well as he can in a dark corner. THE MISER, an old, hook-nosed man, with a dirty white beard and long, scanty hair, is dressed in a sort of squalid, patched dressing-gown. On the floor is an

The Betrothal;

*old carpet, with three sacks bulging
with gold at one corner.)*

THE MISER

To-day I shall count the contents of these three sacks all over again. I must have made a mistake in my last reckoning. There are three louis missing. Three louis are sixty francs, which make a considerable difference in a total of six hundred thousand francs. It's quite impossible to sleep with that anxiety on one's mind. Each of these three sacks ought to hold two hundred thousand francs, the first and second in louis of twenty francs and the third in ten-franc pieces. I shall empty them on the carpet first to see what a lovely heap they make. . . . (*He empties the contents of the first sack on the carpet.*) How they sparkle, how they sparkle! . . . What a lot of them there

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

are! . . . When you see the gold spreading itself out, it's impossible to believe that it all could go into one sack! . . . Let's have another. . . . This is the sack with the little ten-franc pieces. . . . (*He empties a second sack.*) They are as lovely as the big ones. . . . They are younger, that's all, and there are more of them. . . . Now let's see what the third holds. . . . (*He empties the third sack. A few gold coins roll off the carpet. He throws himself flat on the floor to catch them.*) Oh, no, oh, no, children! . . . This won't do! . . . You mustn't run away like that! . . . Nothing is allowed to leave this cave! . . . Trying to hide yourselves, are you? To go where, pray? Don't you know that there's no place like home? . . . Fancy running away like that from daddy! I should never have thought it of you! This way, children, this way,

The Betrothal;

darlings. This way, my pretty ones!
Back to the heap, back to the cradle, then
you'll be happy! . . . (*He picks up a coin
which has rolled farther than the rest.*)
Don't do it again, you: you're always
making off; you're a little torment and you
set a bad example. Beg my pardon, or
I'll punish you. You shall be the first to
be spent; I'll give you to a beggar, do you
hear? . . . (*Kissing it.*) No, no, I'm
only pretending. . . . There, there, don't
cry! . . . I was merely frightening you.
. . . I love you all the same, but don't do
it again! . . . Here, here, here, they're
here, in front of me and all around me.
. . . It will take me quite a fortnight to
count them all and to weigh them in my
scales. . . . What a lot of them, what a
lot of them! And how pretty they are!
. . . I know them every one, I could call
them by their names. . . . They would

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

need a hundred and twenty thousand different names; and each of those names stands for a treasure! . . . (*He rolls on the carpet amidst the gold.*) I love to see them close! . . . Oh, what a cosy bed! And what a joy it is to be among one's daughters! . . . For they are my daughters: I brought them into the world; I have nurtured them, protected them from harm, fondled and pampered them; I know their history, the trouble they've given me, but all is forgotten: they love me, I love them and we shall never part again! . . . Oh, what a fine thing happiness is! . . . (*He fills his two hands with the gold, makes it trickle over his heart, on his forehead and in his beard and utters little sighs of pleasure which gradually swell into roars of delight. Suddenly, he shudders, starts and springs up, thinking that he has heard a sound.*) What is it? . . . Who's there?

The Betrothal;

. . . (*Reassuring himself.*) No, no, it's nothing . . . no one would dare. . . .
(*He sees TYLTYL and gives a shout.*) A thief! . . . A thief! . . . A thief! . . .
You here! . . . You here! . . . (*With his hands clutching like claws, terrified and terrifying, he rushes upon TYLTYL, who jumps back and quickly turns the sapphire. THE MISER stops short. After an inward struggle which seems violent and lasts for some seconds, his hands drop to his sides, his face brightens and loses its hardness. He seems to wake from a bad dream and tries to wipe the memory of it from his forehead. He gazes with astonishment at the gold spread over the carpet, feels and pushes it with his foot, seems not to know what it is and then addresses TYLTYL in a very calm and gentle voice.*)

THE MISER

You must have awakened me. . . .

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

How did you get here? . . . What have
you come for? . . .

TYLTYL

I've come to ask you to lend me a little
money. . . . I understand that I want
some in order to discover my bride. . . .

THE MISER

Have you anything to put it in?

TYLTYL

I've brought this wallet.

THE MISER

I shall be delighted to fill it for you; but
I warn you that gold is very heavy and that
you won't be able to carry it away.

TYLTYL

You must put in just what you think fit.

The Betrothal;

THE MISER

(Pouring the gold by handfuls into the wallet.) Help me, will you? . . . We'll fill it to the brim and see how that does. . . . We can easily lighten it afterwards, if it's too heavy. . . .

TYLT

Oh, you're giving me too much, I don't want all that! . . . So you're not a miser, as they told me?

THE MISER

I? Not at all. Why should I be? . . . I have only a few weeks to live and am not in need of anything. . . . I hardly eat at all; and I drink nothing but water.

TYLTYL

Why were you lying on your gold when

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

I came in, kissing it and calling it by pet names? You seemed to worship it.

THE MISER

Oh, I don't know! It amuses me. When a man grows old, he has to amuse himself as best he can. . . . But it isn't I who do it. All that is only a sort of dream. I am thinking of something very different. . . . All men are like that at my age. They are not often where you see them; they are not often doing what they appear to do; and every one lives in one of those dreams which have nothing to do with the truth. . . . But this is not the moment to explain things to you. . . . There, your wallet is full. Can you lift it?

TYLTYL

(*Making an effort.*) No, really, it is a

The Betrothal;

bit too heavy. . . . Let's take some of it out. . . .

THE MISER

(*Emptying part of the wallet.*) I dare-say that's better.

TYLTYL

Oh, look here, you're taking it all! . . . There won't be enough left. . . . I must put a little of it back. . . .

THE MISER

I say, are you becoming a miser now?

TYLTYL

No, but I don't know that I shall have a chance of coming back again. . . . Just help me lift the wallet on my shoulder. . . .

THE MISER

(*Helping him with the wallet.*) There you are!

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

TYLTYL

(*Staggering under the load.*) I say,
what a weight gold is!

THE MISER

Don't I know it? . . . Have you far to
go?

TYLTYL

I really can't tell.

THE MISER

What's the weather like outside?

TYLTYL

It was bright sunshine.

THE MISER

One wouldn't think it in here. . . .
Fancy, it's years since I've looked at the
sky or the green trees! . . . But you can't
breathe under the weight of your bag, you

The Betrothal;

poor little man! . . . Come, kiss me good-bye: there's no knowing when we shall meet again. . . . Thanks for the pleasant time you have given me and especially for waking me up. . . . I shall make the most of my remaining days. . . .

TYLTYL

Which is the way out?

THE MISER

That way, I suppose.

(TYLTYL steps forward through the arch. The doors at once slide and close behind him and he is left standing alone, in the dark, in front of the great shut door.)

TYLTYL

It's dark. . . . I'm all alone. . . .
Where am I? . . . Where am I to go?

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

DESTINY

(Looming up out of the shadow.)

This way!

TYLTYL

Hullo! You're there, are you? I thought you had deserted me. . . .

DESTINY

(Grasping his hand.) I was here all the time. . . . I never lose sight of you. . . .

TYLTYL

Yes, but, I say, don't walk so fast! . . . My bag's frightfully heavy. . . . It would be much kinder of you if you helped me to carry it a little, instead of making me rush along like this. . . .

DESTINY

I am not man's servant. . . . Forward, forward, forward! . . .

(They go out.)

SCENE IV

A Closet in the Fairy's Palace

A sort of waiting-room or lumber-room containing the principal accessories of the Tales of Mother Goose: Cinderella's pumpkin and glass slipper; Red Ridinghood's cake and bowl; Hop-o'-my-Thumb's pebbles; the Ogre's daughters' golden crowns; the Sleeping Beauty's distaff and snake-tub; the Giant's seven-leagued boots; Blue Beard's key; the Blue Bird in his silver cage; and, hanging from the wall, Catskin's weather-coloured, moon-coloured and sun-coloured dresses. All these things look rather tawdry in the grey and unbecoming light. TYL-

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

TYL's seven little friends are locked up in this room. In the same unsympathetic light they look much less pretty than when they entered the cottage and they seem rather tired, discontented and glum, except THE VEILED GIRL, who stands on one side, motionless, impassive and unrevealing.

BELLINE

Where have they brought us?

ROSARELLE

I don't know; but I must say that it's not a nice place in which to keep young ladies waiting.

BELLINE

Yes, it looks like a lumber-room where they've stored all the odds and ends and litter of the house.

The Betrothal;

ROSARELLE

(*Touching the various objects in disgust.*) What's this? A distaff? Bless me, what for? . . . A pumpkin, a cake, an old bowl and goodness knows what else! . . . A tub full of dead eels! Gracious, how they smell! . . . It's all disgracefully kept. . . . And that lot of old fly-blown, spun-glass dresses! . . . My dear, how horrible! . . . What sort of place can this be? A potting-shed, a rag-and-bone shop, a pawn-broker's, or a thieves' kitchen? Whom can it belong to? A receiver of stolen goods? (*Touching the more bizarre dresses.*) Or a Hottentot dressmaker?

BELLINE

There's something of everything . . . except a broom and a duster.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

ROSARELLE

One wouldn't be enough.

BELLINE

And nothing to sit on but an old wooden
bench. . . .

ROSARELLE

But it's carved, my love! . . .

BELLINE

Yes, carved in dust.

ROSARELLE

Reach me one of those hideous rags and
let me wipe it. . . .

BELLINE

(Eagerly and obsequiously.) Wait,
miss, I'll do that. . . . *(She takes the
moon-coloured dress and dusts the seat
with it.)* There, that's a little better;

The Betrothal;

that's at least one corner nearly clean enough to sit on.

ROSARELLE

(*Sitting down.*) I'm tired out!

BELLINE

(*Sitting down beside her.*) So am I; my feet are dreadfully sore.

ROSARELLE

(*Looking around through her lorgnette.*) But what I want to know is where have we got to? My dear, have we fallen into a trap?

BELLINE

The company certainly is a little mixed. There's the miller's daughter, the girl from the inn, the wood-cutter . . .

ROSARELLE

Or rather, to be accurate, the wood-

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

stealer. . . . There's even the little beggar-girl from the bridge by the Hermitage, to whom I refused a penny last Sunday. . . . My dear, you should have heard the insolent way in which she asked for it! . . .

BELLINE

And what's that white image standing in the corner, the one that never stirs, never speaks and follows us wherever we go?

ROSARELLE

That great lump of clay, that ugly wax-work? That washed-out plaster saint?

BELLINE

She looks very ill.

ROSARELLE

She may have Jewish leprosy or Zanzibar plague or Bombay cholera. . . . I tell

The Betrothal;

you, we must be careful: that's all very catching. . . .

AIMETTE

(*Coming up to the bench timidly.*) I should like to sit down too, I'm very tired. . . .

ROSARELLE

Mind what you're about, miss! . . . There's dust enough as it is; I don't want flour into the bargain.

ROSELLE

What's all this, what's all this? Are we turning up our nose at flour now?

ROSARELLE

I wasn't addressing my remarks to you, madam.

ROSELLE

No, but I'm speaking to you. What bread would you eat if you had no flour?

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

ROSARELLE

You would do better to tell your father to pay the three quarters' rent that's in arrear.

ROSELLE

He'll pay his rent when your horrid old miser of a grandfather has seen to those repairs. We've been asking to have them done these last three years.

BELLINE

Is it the repairs that prevent your father from paying his butcher's bills?

ROSELLE

Does he owe anything at your shop?

BELLINE

It's six months since we saw the colour of his money.

The Betrothal;

ROSELLE

He's waiting to see the colour of yours at the inn.

BELLINE

Of mine indeed? You can wait a long time before I set foot in your dirty dram-shop.

ROSELLE

Yes, but that father of yours isn't so squeamish when he comes on Sundays and tipples till we have to put him out dead-drunk.

ROSARELLE

Don't answer her, my dear; we are not accustomed to these pot-house brawls.

ROSELLE

As for you, miss, who pretend to be so particular, you just go and ask your father, the mayor, who it was that nibbled the

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

holes, which were not made by rats, in the town's cash-box.

ROSARELLE

(Springing to her feet, furiously.)

Holes which were not made by rats!
What do you mean?

ROSELLE

I mean what every one in the village means! . . .

ROSARELLE

Mind what you're saying; and say it again if you dare.

ROSELLE

Well, what would you do if I did say it again? You don't frighten me with your airs and graces.

The Betrothal;

ROSARELLE

Never mind my airs and graces; I'll soon show you what I'll do.

ROSELLE

Well, then, I do say it again.

ROSARELLE

(*Boxing her ears.*) And take that for your answer! . . .

(*Piercing screams and a general turmoil. ROSELLE and AIMETTE make a rush at BELLINE and ROSARELLE, while MILETTE and JALLINE vainly try to separate the combatants. THE VEILED GIRL alone remains motionless in her corner, as though she were not present. The others claw one another's faces, tear one another's hair and end by uttering such pierc-*

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

ing yells and shrieks that TYLTYL, returning from the MISER's, hears them from the far end of the palace and comes running up, scared and dismayed. He is bare-headed and only half-dressed and does not understand what is going on.)

TYLTYL

What is it? What's the matter? What has happened? An accident? Are you hurt? What have you been doing?

THE GIRLS

(All speaking together.) It's she!
. . . No, no, it was Rosarelle who began!
. . . I tell you, it was she! . . . She insulted me! . . . She boxed my ears! . . .
She dared to talk against my father! . . .
She spoke ill of my mother! . . . She's lying, she's lying! . . . She nearly pulled

The Betrothal;

my ear off! . . . She's driven a hairpin
into my cheek! . . .

(*Enter* THE FAIRY.)

THE FAIRY

Why, what's the matter?

TYLTYL

(*In bewilderment.*) I don't know,
ma'am. I think they must have gone mad.
They were so sweet when I left them. I
should never have known them! . . .
Look, look, they are quite different! . . .
Rosarelle and Belline's eyes are blazing
like furies', Aimette looks so spiteful and
Roselle so brazen, Jalline hasn't washed
herself and Milette's cheeks are as red as
a turkey-cock's. . . . (*Bursting into tears
and hiding his eyes with his arm, like a
child crying.*) I can't bear it! Oh, I
can't bear it!

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

THE FAIRY

But, you little silly, it's your own fault!

TYLTYL

My fault?

THE FAIRY

Yes, of course, it's your fault. . . .
And, first, where have you come from?
What have you done with your jacket and
your green hat?

TYLTYL

Why, ma'am, I was busy dressing; I was
putting on the little pair of silk breeches
and the jacket embroidered with pearls
which you told me I was to wear when I
went to see the Ancestors. . . . Then I
heard screams, dropped everything, ran
up and found them fighting, tearing out one

The Betrothal;

another's hair and scratching one another's faces. . . .

THE FAIRY

A pretty business! . . . That will teach you to run after them without your talisman, which reveals the truth. . . . I call it most incorrect and improper. . . . Don't you see that you are not seeing them now as they are? . . .

TYLTYL

I'm not seeing them as they are? . . . Then how do I see them? . . .

THE FAIRY

Why, as they are not, that is to say, as you ought never to see them. . . . It's all so wonderfully simple: anything that's ugly isn't true, never has been true and never will be.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

TYLTYL

That's easily said; but you see what you do see.

THE FAIRY

When you see what you do see, you see nothing at all. . . . I've told you before, it's what you do not see that makes the world go round. . . . All this doesn't count; it's only a little foam on the surface of the ocean. . . . But run quickly and fetch the sapphire and we shall once more see deep down into their souls, the truth of their hearts and the well-spring of their life. . . . Wait, you needn't trouble: I see Light coming; she has brought you your hat.

(*Enter* LIGHT.)

LIGHT

Good-evening, Tytyl.

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

(*Throwing himself passionately into her arms.*) Oh, Light, Light! . . . It's my dear Light! . . . Where were you? . . . What have you been doing ever since I saw you last? . . . I have missed you so much and looked for you so often! . . .

LIGHT

My dear little Tytyl! . . . I have never lost sight of you. . . . I have guided you and counselled you and kissed you very often, without your knowing it. . . . But we will talk about all this later; to-day we have no time; I have only one night to give you and there is a great deal to be done.

(*Enter DESTINY.*)

DESTINY

Where is Tytyl?

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

TYLTYL

Here. I'm not trying to hide.

DESTINY

And quite right too, for it would be no use; there's no escaping me. . . .

TYLTYL

(Contemplating him in astonishment.)

But what's the matter with you? . . .
What has happened to you? You look
so much smaller! . . . You seem to be
less tall and less broad. . . . You're not
ill, are you? . . .

DESTINY

(Who has indeed shrunk appreciably.)

I? I never change, I am always the same;
I am insuperable, insensible, invulnerable,
immutable, inexorable, irresistible, invis-
ible, inflexible and irrevocable! . . .

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

All right, all right, what I said was merely . . .

THE FAIRY

(*Aside, to TYLTYL.*) Be quiet, you will only vex him and he will get out of hand. . . . It is probably being so close to Light that has upset him; they never did agree. . . . (*Aloud.*) Come, children, it's time. . . . Put on your hat, Tytyl, and turn the sapphire; we shall see what happens: sometimes it works upon people's hearts, sometimes on their minds, sometimes on the objects around them and often on all three; one cannot tell beforehand. . . .

(*He turns the sapphire. The closet brightens with a blue and supernatural light which gives beauty and life to everything in the room;*

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

the accessories of Mother Goose seem to wake up: the spindle revolves madly and unreels threads of gold and crystal; the pumpkin swells, sways from side to side and lights up; the Blue Bird bursts into song; the snake-tub bubbles and pours forth fruits and flowers; the moon-coloured and sun-coloured dresses wave and glitter; the columns and aisles gleam with precious stones. But the group of GIRLS especially undergoes a radical and wonderful transformation: their features relax, their eyes open wider, smiles blossom on their lips, their frocks become gay and splendid, innocence, gladness, kindness and beauty bloom once more; and TYLTYL, in an ecstasy, clapping his hands, intoxicated with delight,

The Betrothal;

rushes into the midst of them, giving and receiving kisses and not knowing which of them to listen to.)

TYLTYL

They're themselves again, they're themselves again! . . . How lovely they are, how lovely they are! . . . Jalline, Milette my darling, Aimette, Belline darling, Rosarelle, Roselle! . . . They are all as they were before and I love every one of them! . . . Let us kiss again, again, again! . . . Oh, let us kiss for ever! . . .

(At this moment, THE VEILED GIRL, who has played no part in the transfiguration or in the general ecstasy, staggers in her corner and, without uttering a sound, falls suddenly and unresistingly, like a statue, and lies motionless, stretched on the floor.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

*Silence, terror and consternation,
followed by cries and bustle; THE
GIRLS rush to her assistance and
gather eagerly round her.)*

ROSELLE

(Lifting her up.) Help me, somebody!

ROSARELLE

She isn't hurt, is she?

ROSELLE

(Examining her anxiously.) No, no, I can't see anything.

AIMETTE

(Stroking her forehead.) She's breathing, she's sighing.

ROSARELLE

(Kissing her.) She has only fainted.

The Betrothal;

. . . Tell us what you feel. . . . You're not in pain, dear, are you?

MILETTE

She doesn't answer.

JALLINE

(*Taking one of her hands and stroking it.*) Perhaps she's hungry.

MILETTE

(*Stroking the other hand.*) No, can't you feel? She's cold.

JALLINE

Will you have my cloak?

ROSELLE

No, no, it's not that. . . . What she wants is a drop of brandy. . . . I haven't my bottle. . . . And don't all crowd

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

round her, she's suffocating. She wants air! . . .

ROSARELLE

(*Supporting her head.*) Have you some water there? . . . We ought to send for a doctor. . . .

BELLINE

She's as white as marble. . . . She might be dead. . . .

ROSARELLE

No, no, she's coming to. . . . I can hear her heart beating. . . .

THE FAIRY

(*Intervening.*) Come, come, it's nothing. . . . I have practised medicine longer than men have and know a little more about it. Do not be uneasy; there is nothing to fear; I will undertake to cure

The Betrothal;

her. . . . But we are wasting precious time, the night is passing and we shall get nothing done. . . . (*To THE GIRLS.*) Come, dears, go and dress yourselves; your cloaks are waiting for you and everything is ready. Just follow Light; she will advise you. . . . We will meet in the great ballroom of the palace. . . . (*THE GIRLS go out, preceded by LIGHT. To DESTINY.*) You too, Destiny, follow Light; you want another costume. You can't go as you are. One must not be conspicuous, especially at this moment. . . . (*DESTINY obeys, grudgingly.*) I don't quite know how to dress the fellow. However, Light will think of something: she has more imagination than I. . . . Let's see to the little patient. She's better. . . . (*Helping her to rise.*) There, there. . . . Sit down on this bench. . . . No? . . . You prefer to stand up? . . .

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

As you please: in that case, lean against the column, for the walls will soon disappear. . . . Now that we are alone, Tylytyl, will you tell me at last, between ourselves, who that girl is? . . .

TYLTYL

But, ma'am, I don't know at all. . . .

THE FAIRY

You must make an effort. . . . She can't live unless you remember who she is. . . . It's a great responsibility.

TYLTYL

But it's not my fault. . . . I've done what I could; I can't make it out.

THE FAIRY

So much the worse for you. I can't understand it either. . . . Come, get dressed. Here's the little jacket which

The Betrothal

Light brought you. . . . And now, with one stroke of the wand, we will enter the ballroom and see what your little friends have made of themselves. (*She touches the panels of the closet, which disappear.*)

SCENE V

A Ballroom in the Fairy's Palace

(All that remains standing is the columns and aisles forming the portico of an immense, luminous room, which might have been hewn and carved out of a mountain of amber. Under the dazzling arches THE SIX GIRLS move about, arrayed in resplendent, trailing gowns, with their feet encased in gilt sandals, their hair hanging loose and their hands filled with flowers. They joyously beckon to TYLTYL, who, at first dumbfounded, rushes towards them and joins in their games and dances. THE VEILED GIRL alone

The Betrothal

*stands on one side, leaning against
the column.)*

THE FAIRY

*(Observing DESTINY, draped in a long
black cape, with a broad-brimmed Spanish
sombrero on his head.)* I say, there's
Destiny! . . . She has dressed him like
the villain in a play! . . . *(Clapping her
hands.)* Come, children, it is time to be
starting. . . . All this doesn't count: the
real work is about to begin. . . .

CURTAIN

ACT III

ACT III

SCENE VI

Before the Curtain representing Rocks

(Enter TYLTYL and LIGHT.)

TYLTYL

(Out of breath, dropping on to a boulder.) They live a long way up, the Ancestors! . . . Aren't you tired?

LIGHT

No, I was born in the mountains.

TYLTYL

(Bending over a crevice.) You're not like Destiny, who has almost given out.



The Betrothal;

. . . He's still at the bottom of the last precipice, with my little friends. . . . He stumbles at every step and is limping badly. . . . They won't be here yet awhile; and I am very glad to have a moment alone with you, before they come, for I have a lot of things to ask you. . . .

LIGHT

Ask me anything you like, dear; I will do my best to answer.

TYLTYL

What do you think of these little friends of mine? . . . If you had to choose, which would you take? . . .

LIGHT

I like them all, but it is not for me to choose; no one but yourself can tell which one you love best.



or, The Blue Bird Chooses

TYLTYL

Ah, that's not so easy! . . . You see, I love them all! . . . For instance, I love little Jalline, the beggar's daughter: she is so gentle and sweet, such a darling! . . .

LIGHT

Yes, she is very attractive: a pretty little creature, with a pure and simple mind. . . .

TYLTYL

But I also love the Mayor's daughter, Rosarelle. . . . She is really very beautiful, not a bit conceited and much better-educated than the others. . . . And then think of what she has done: she has left everything to go with me. . . .

LIGHT

Yes, that is the proof of a real love. . . .

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

But I also love Roselle, the inn-keeper's daughter, who is a very pretty girl, so healthy and strong and frank and brave and cheerful and amusing: you can't think how kind and affectionate she is. . . .

LIGHT

Yes, she has qualities; and I too find her very sympathetic. . . .

TYLTYL

But I also love the wood-cutter's daughter, Milette. . . . She has such beautiful eyes and hair! . . . At first she seems a little awkward, a little shy; but it's quite different when you know her: she is really very playful and full of fun. . . . And then, have you noticed her mouth and her teeth?

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

LIGHT

Yes, I've noticed them. . . .

TYLTYL

But I also love Belline, the butcher's daughter. . . . To begin with, she's my cousin; and one always loves one's cousins. And then there's something about her dark beautiful eyes that frightens me rather. I adore that. . . . But she's not unkind, not at all. . . . Have you noticed her smile? One can never tell exactly what it means. . . .

LIGHT

Yes, she has a strange smile. . . .

TYLTYL

But I also love the miller's daughter, Aimette. . . . To begin with, she's also my cousin. . . . She keeps her eyes low-

The Betrothal;

ered under her long, curling eyelashes; she blushes when you look at her and weeps when you speak to her. . . . She looks a little silly; well, she's not that at all. She's quite different when you know her a bit. . . . She's very bright and very jolly and whispers such nice, sweet things to you that you at once want to kiss her. . . .

LIGHT

I can see that the choice will not be easy.

TYLTYL

Which do you think the best?

LIGHT

There are neither better nor worse; each one is as good as the other; and all are good when they suffer or when they love.

TYLTYL

The nuisance is that it seems you mustn't

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

love more than one. . . . Tell me, though, is that true, or is it only one of the things people say to children just to keep them quiet?

LIGHT

No, it's true. When you love many, that merely shows that you haven't yet found the one whom you were to love.

TYLTYL

But, after all, you, who know everything and see everything, must know better than I and can tell me what I ought to do.

LIGHT

No, dear, that is beyond me, beyond the range of my sight. It is for this very reason that we are going to consult those who do know; and they are near at hand, because it is in you that they live. We seem to be taking a great journey: that is

The Betrothal;

an illusion; we are not going outside yourself and all our adventures are happening within you. . . . But I hear your little friends. Where is your green hat?

TYLTYL

Here. I took it off because I felt hot.

LIGHT

Put it on again quickly, so that there may be no more misunderstandings, and turn the sapphire.

(He does so. Forthwith, on every side, all sorts of monsters emerge from the ground and from between the rocks: monsters with more or less human or animal shapes and grotesque, brutish or repulsive faces. They hustle TYLTYL, gather together and dance round him.)

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

TYLTYL

(*Terrified.*) Hullo, hullo, what's all this? . . .

LIGHT

Nothing. You must have turned the sapphire from left to right.

TYLTYL

So I did, I believe; I forgot. . . . But what do they want with me? They are pushing up against me and snapping at my feet.

LIGHT

They won't hurt you; they are merely your own thoughts, which you sometimes secretly think; now you have set them free and they are showing themselves for an instant as they are.

TYLTYL

What! . . . Are my thoughts as ugly

The Betrothal;

as that? . . . I should never have believed it! . . .

LIGHT

Don't take it so much to heart! . . . They are not as ugly as some, because you are still innocent and very young. . . . If you were to see those of other men! . . . Besides, you have beautiful ones; but they are more reluctant to show themselves. . . . However, I see the girls coming. . . . Turn the sapphire from right to left, so that we may get rid of these monsters, whom they must not see. . . .

(He does so; and the creatures go back into the ground. Enter THE SIX GIRLS, preceded by DESTINY and followed, at a distance, by THE WHITE PHANTOM, who keeps on one side. They surround TYLTYL, overwhelming him with caresses and all speaking at the same time.)

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

THE GIRLS

Good-evening, Tytyl! . . . We've found you again! . . . We were so anxious about you! . . . We couldn't keep up with you. . . . Aren't you tired? . . . May we kiss you? . . . Destiny held us back. . . . I wanted to run. . . . He stood in the way. . . . Aren't you too hot? . . . Mind you don't catch cold. . . . Kiss me too! . . . And me too! . . . And me too! . . .

TYLTYL

(*Distributing kisses all round.*) My sweethearts! . . . What darlings you are, and how happy I feel! . . . I hope I have not made you walk too fast? . . . You must forgive me; I am rather in a hurry. . . . Jalline dear, you haven't hurt your foot, have you? . . . And you, Rosarelle? You are not used to climbing rocks. . . .

The Betrothal;

Aimette's hands are cold and Roselle has made herself much too hot. . . .

LIGHT

Come, we will talk about all this later. We must now hasten to the Ancestors, who are waiting for us and would be very much annoyed if we arrived late. . . .

DESTINY

(Who has grown smaller still and is now hardly taller than a man of average height. He seems very tired and sits huddled on a boulder.) Not a step farther! . . .

TYLTYL

Hullo! You've grown a bit smaller again! . . .

DESTINY

I? I've not changed. I am always the same, I am . . .

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

TYLTYL

I know, I know. . . . It's Light being
so near, perhaps . . .

DESTINY

Light and I have nothing in common.
. . . In any event, I alone am master and
I order a halt. . . .

LIGHT

By all means; there is no need to go any
farther. We have arrived; we are here
without taking another step, at the abode
of the Ancestors. . . .

*(The curtain parts and opens upon
the next scene.)*

SCENE VII

The Abode of the Ancestors

A large open space, under an Elysian light, which imparts to all things an aspect of ethereal and lasting felicity and unchanging gladness. The back and the two sides of the square are formed of dwelling-places of different periods, some stately, some lowly, but all radiant and a little unreal. In the foreground, on the right, for instance, is the entrance to the cottage of TYLTYL'S grandparents; next comes the gable of a farm-house of older date; then the front of a little eighteenth-century shop; and thus in succession, running from right to left

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

and across the back, a seventeenth-century town-house, a sixteenth-century prison, tavern and hospital, a fifteenth-century mansion; some thirteenth-century hovels, a twelfth-century church, a Gallo-Roman farm and villa, and so on. Intersecting the background at the middle is a street in endless perspective, bordered with the very oldest houses and leading to the huts and caves of primitive mankind. In the foreground are a few stone benches standing under fine trees, laurels, plane-trees or cypresses.

(TYLTYL, LIGHT, DESTINY and THE SIX GIRLS come forward, followed at a distance by THE WHITE PHANTOM, who keeps to one side as usual. They have taken but a few steps when GAFFER and GRANNY TYL come hurrying out of their cottage and, with

The Betrothal;

exclamations of delight, throw themselves into TYLTYL's arms.)

GRANNY TYL

Tyltyl! Tyltyl! . . . Gracious, you again! . . . But this time it's not a surprise. We were expecting you; we were told three days ago. . . . All the same, though, we're so glad to see you that it's difficult to believe at first. . . . But how big and strong you've grown, dear! And so good-looking: I should never have known you! . . . Oh, dear, how nice it is to get a kiss like this now and again! . . .

GAFFER TYL

Haven't you brought Mytyl this time? . . .

GRANNY TYL

Of course he hasn't; you know it's not

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

her turn yet. . . . We know what you're here for, Tytyl: it's not to see us! You needn't blush! . . . You young rascal, you scamp! . . . There, there, you're quite right; and the sooner you set about it the better. . . . So it's one of these girls they have to choose?

TYLTYL

Yes, Granny, it seems so.

GAFFER TYL

(*Eyeing them like an expert.*) Ho, ho! . . . And, my word, a very nice lot too! My compliments! I admire your taste. . . . (*Pointing to ROSELLE.*) If I were you, I'd choose that one: she's the prettiest and the plumpest.

GRANNY TYL

Hold your tongue; no one's asking your

The Betrothal;

advice: you know you've no say in the matter. We're still too young; we've hardly begun to get cold and haven't had time yet to pick up things. . . . It takes so long; there's so much to learn! . . . But the others, especially the oldest, who now are the youngest: it's they who know everything. . . .

TYLTYL

What? The oldest are the youngest in this country? . . .

GRANNY TYL

Yes, it seems one gets younger as one grows older. . . . I'm beginning to notice it myself.

TYLTYL

That's odd. . . . But where on earth are they? . . . I see nobody. . . .

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

GAFFER TYL

They'll come very soon. . . . I wonder
they're not here yet.

TYLTYL

Are there many of them?

GRANNY TYL

What do you think! All your ancestors
since the world began! There'd be so
many that we shouldn't know where to
put them! . . . But we shall only see a
few of them. A good many are travelling
in other worlds; and, as a fact, some of the
oldest are always away. But those who
are on the spot choose in the name of all.
They always agree; and it seems they very
seldom make a mistake. . . . But here's
one coming out of his house. You see the
little man shutting up his shop?

The Betrothal;

(*A spruce LITTLE MAN is seen leaving the eighteenth-century shop.*)

TYLTYL

Who's he?

GRANNY TYL

It's your grandfather's grandfather; he was a grocer at Versailles in the reign of Louis the Fifteenth.

TYLTYL

What funny clothes!

GRANNY TYL

He has put on the things which he wore in his shop. . . . Here, as a rule, the weather is so mild, the air so warm and balmy, that we've no need to dress ourselves; but you wouldn't be able to see us if we had no clothes; and so, in your honour, we've put on those we used to

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

wear on earth. . . . It'll be quite amusing: some of them date back ever so far. . . . Look, there they come, out of the houses they once lived in. . . .

(Enter from the town-house a CITIZEN of the time of Louis XIV; from the sixteenth-century prison a PRISONER still wearing chains and irons on his feet and hands. His shackles now seem to be light and cause him no inconvenience. He attracts TYLTYL's attention.)

TYLTYL

Who is that one? Was he chained up?

GRANNY TYL

Yes, he is one of your ancestors who spent nearly all his life in prison.

TYLTYL

It's not a thing to boast of; he'd have done better to stay at home.

The Betrothal;

GRANNY TYL

He did nothing wrong. He used to steal bread or other little things which one could eat, to keep his children from starving. He suffered a great deal; we think a lot of him. . . .

(THE ANCESTORS *continue to leave their houses. An imposing and richly-dressed MAN appears on the threshold of the fifteenth-century mansion.*)

TYLTYL

(*Pointing to him.*) And that one?

GAFFER TYL

That one is the richest. . . . It appears we were very rich at one time, but that didn't last. . . . However, it doesn't matter here: the only thing that counts, it seems, is what a man has done or thought.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

. . . For instance, you see those beggars over there, coming out of the church?

(Enter from the twelfth-century church some four or five BEGGARS, clad in rags that are pitiful to look at, but idealized by the fairy atmosphere.)

TYLTYL

Yes, any number of them.

GAFFER TYL

Well, it seems that several generations of us were beggars. . . . We succeeded one another, father and son, at the same church and in the same doorway. It was very good for us, they say. It taught us patience, resignation, endurance, temperance and the habit of never catching cold. . . . But do you see the oldest, the one who looks poorest of all?

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

The one with the beautiful white beard?

GAFFER TYL

Precisely. . . . Well, he's the Great Mendicant, the one whom we respect most, first because he has an iron constitution and next because he appears to have thought a very great deal in his corner under the porch. . . . They say it's he who did most to develop our brains.

TYLTYL

But I don't see any women among them. Where are their wives? Weren't they married?

GRANNY TYL

Of course they were; but there's nothing for us women to do to-day. The men choose the women and the women the men.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

. . . When Mytyl comes, it will be our turn.

TYLTYL

Look, there are three more.

(A diseased MAN comes out of the hospital; another, carrying a bottle and looking rather tipsy, out of the tavern; and, lastly, out of the prison, a third figure, hairy and savage of aspect, brandishing a blood-stained knife.)

GAFFER TYL

(Dismayed.) I don't like this. . . .
It's very tiresome that they should have been told. . . .

TYLTYL

Why, who are they?

GAFFER TYL

An ugly lot, those three: the sick man,

The Betrothal;

the drunkard and the murderer. . . .
They've done us a deal of harm.

TYLTYL

Then there was a murderer in the family?

GAFFER TYL

Of course, as in every family. Fortunately, none of the three has much influence over us. As you see, they are small and sickly; they shrink from century to century and are nothing like as healthy as the others. . . . But it won't do for them to meddle in your choice. . . . If the Great Peasant, the Great Mendicant and the Great Ancestor are there, all will go well: the others won't dare to breathe a word; if not, they will try to force their choice upon you and that will be a bad thing for you and for the future of the entire family.

(Enter from the old farm-house a tall

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

PEASANT, *dressed in the mediaeval style. He closes the door carefully and steps forward whittling a switch.*)

GAFFER TYL

Here comes the Great Peasant! That's good, that's good!

TYLTYL

That long, thin fellow?

GAFFER TYL

He certainly isn't fat; but he has great influence. He is one of the mainstays of the family.

(Next enter from the villa one or two GALLO-ROMANS and then, from the back of the street, among other MEN of the Stone Age, an exceedingly tall old MAN, dressed in skins and leaning on a heavy club.)

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

Why, we've got right back to savages
now!

GAFFER TYL

That's the one!

TYLTYL

Who?

GAFFER TYL

The Great Ancestor!

TYLTYL

What? The one like an ape, with the
big stick?

GAFFER TYL

You *must* be quiet! . . . Don't treat
him with disrespect! . . . It's a great fa-
vour that he's showing you; he doesn't
often go out. . . . Of all our race he's the

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

most important, the greatest, the most respected. . . . Everything's shaping well: it'll probably be he, the Great Peasant and the Great Mendicant who will put their heads together and choose your bride for you.

TYLTYL

(*Indignantly.*) But I won't have that! . . . It doesn't concern them! . . . What do they know about it? . . . A peasant, a savage and a beggar: what next?

GAFFER TYL

Hold your tongue, I say! . . . I tell you, they represent all that is best in you and in the whole family. If you obey them, if you submit to their influence, you will be happy and safe. . . . Mind now! They're coming. . . .

(*THE ANCESTORS have been gradually collecting at the back of the*

The Betrothal;

stage. They bow, accost one another, shake hands, exchange compliments. All show affectionate respect to THE GREAT PEASANT, THE GREAT MENDICANT and especially THE GREAT ANCESTOR, gathering around them and listening deferentially to what they say. On the other hand, THE SICK MAN, THE DRUNKARD and THE MURDERER are left standing apart, forming a pitiful rear-guard. The group now moves towards the benches in the foreground, where TYLTYL and his companions are gathered.)

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

(*Coming forward.*) Good-evening,
Tyltyl!

TYLTYL

Good-evening . . . sir!

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

Kiss me first. Don't be afraid. I look rather savage, but it is only a shape which I had to put on in order to make myself visible to you. I had no other handy. . . . But I am really quite clean and I don't smell bad.

TYLTYL

I never said you did!

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

No, but to judge by the grimace you made you weren't quite sure! . . . (*Sitting down on the middle bench.*) I will sit down here; the Great Mendicant will take his seat on my right and the Great Peasant on my left. They don't smell either. . . . (THE GREAT MENDICANT *and* THE GREAT PEASANT *take their seats; the other ANCESTORS stand behind him.*) And I

The Betrothal;

will take you on my knees. . . . I am glad to hold you in my arms for a moment. . . . We have known each other so long!

TYLTYL

I don't remember ever seeing you before.

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

And yet we have always lived in each other; for you were already living in me when I was on earth; and now I live in you while you are still on that same earth, which we seem to have quitted. . . . But what do you think of this place of ours? . . . Let me have the pleasure of showing you over your home.

TYLTYL

My home?

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

Certainly. . . . You are at home here.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

. . . And a very nice home it is. . . .
Everything you see—this square, that
prison, the church, those houses, we who
live in them — all this is really only inside
yourself. . . . People rarely see it, they
don't even suspect it; but it's true.

TYLTYL

I should never have thought there was
so much room inside myself and that it was
so large. . . .

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

It's much larger really; there's a great
deal that you don't see. . . . But that is
not what interests us to-day; let us come
straight to the point, to the great question
that brings you here. . . . We are going
to choose the woman whom you are to
love. . . .

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

Since you are so kind, there's one thing
I should like to ask you. . . .

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

Ask me any questions you please.

TYLTYL

How is it that I have not, like other
men, the right to choose the woman I
love?

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

But you have the right to choose and
are here for the sole purpose of making
that choice.

TYLTYL

No, they tell me that it's you and the
others who will make it.

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

But I and the others are all you. . . .

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

You are we, we are you; and it's all the same thing.

TYLTYL

Not for me. . . . They keep on telling me to hold my tongue, that it's not my business, that it's no concern of mine. . . . Everybody's allowed to get a word in, except me. . . . I've had enough, I'm sick and tired of it! . . . Where do I come in? That's what I want to know!

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

You're simply acting as all men act when they think they are doing what they want to do.

TYLTYL

But, after all, dash it, what business is it of yours? I can understand, in a way, that the children I may one day have should claim some right to select their mother;

The Betrothal;

but the rest of you, over here, what difference can it make to you?

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

Don't you see that it's all the same? Those who have lived in you live in you just as much as those who are going to. There is no difference, it all connects and it's still the same family.

TYLTYL

As you please, but I can't make it out. . . . And, if I refuse to obey, if I love just for myself, if I take a different girl from the one they want to force on me, what will they do then? What will happen?

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

Merely this, that the choice you will have made for yourself, without our ap-

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

proval, will not be a real choice; in other words, you will not love the woman whom you thought you loved. You will have made a mistake, you will be unhappy and, at the same time, you will make all of us unhappy, those who came before you as well as those who come after.

TYLTYL

Does that often happen?

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

Very often, far too often: that is why you see so many unhappy people on earth.

TYLTYL

Well, what am I to do?

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

Where are your little friends? . . .
Would you mind coming a little nearer,

The Betrothal;

dear ladies? . . . (*Gazing with attention at THE SIX GIRLS, who come forward and stand in front of him.*) Well, well, you have set us our task, but you have made it very difficult: how is one to select when all are equally beautiful?

THE GREAT MENDICANT

They are really very handsome.

THE GREAT PEASANT

And they appear to be very healthy, very quiet and very hard-working.

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

Do you recognize the one among them for whom we are waiting?

THE GREAT MENDICANT

Not yet.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

It's strange, neither do I. . . . (*To*
THE GREAT PEASANT.) And you?

THE GREAT PEASANT

I can't say that I don't and I can't say
that I do.

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

It's strange, very strange. And yet we
know that the one who will make us happy
has arrived and is here among us. We
generally recognize her at the first glance.

THE GREAT MENDICANT

I can't understand it.

THE RICH ANCESTOR

(*Standing behind the bench, pointing to*
ROSARELLE.) Isn't it that one? . . .
What's your name, my dear?

The Betrothal;

ROSARELLE

Rosarelle.

THE RICH ANCESTOR

Who are you?

ROSARELLE

The daughter of the Mayor.

THE RICH ANCESTOR

Are you rich?

ROSARELLE

My father has money, I believe.

THE RICH ANCESTOR

You see? There is no doubt about it.

THE SICK ANCESTOR

(*Pointing to AIMETTE.*) I say it's that one.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

THE DRUNKEN ANCESTOR

(*Taking hold of ROSELLE.*) This is the one I want.

THE MURDERER ANCESTOR

(*Leaping over the bench and taking hold of BELLINE.*) And I take this one!

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

(*Rising, in an authoritative tone.*) Be silent . . . and withdraw! . . . (*With an imperious gesture.*) Begone! . . . You know that you have lost the right to raise your voice in my presence! . . .

(*The four dissentient ANCESTORS, addressed in these terms, move away crestfallen.*)

THE OTHER ANCESTORS

(*Grouped behind the bench, clapping their hands.*) Hear! Hear! . . . Well

The Betrothal;

done! . . . It's what they deserve! . . .
They have been wrong too often!
. . . They have done too much harm! . . .
They would be the ruin of the family! . . .

JALLINE

(*Going to the GREAT MENDICANT and clasping his knees.*) Perhaps I'm the one.
. . . I love him so!

MILETTE

(*Going to THE GREAT PEASANT and clasping his knees.*) If you want to know how much I love him, look at me and see.

AIMETTE

(*Going to THE GREAT ANCESTOR and clasping his knees.*) Can't you see that I have loved him longer than the others? I have loved him since I first set eyes on him.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

I never dared say so; but I feel that I shall die if you choose another.

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

My poor children, it is very sad, but my hands are tied. You will perhaps cry for a few hours; but, if we chose one of you, she would spend her whole life crying, for I do not see among you the one for whom we are waiting. . . . Tytyl!

TYLTYL

Yes?

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

Have you brought us no one else, besides those we see here?

TYLTYL

No, no one else.

The Betrothal;

THE GREAT MENDICANT

I see a tall white figure over there,
against a tree; who is it?

TYLTYL

I really don't know. She follows us all
the time, squeezes in wherever we go, no-
body knows her; and we can't get rid of
her.

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

Go and fetch her.

(TYLTYL *fetches* THE WHITE PHAN-
TOM *and brings her back, holding*
her by the hand.)

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

Who are you?

TYLTYL

It's no use asking her. She never an-
swers; she can't talk.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

(To THE PHANTOM.) Come nearer, child, and let me lift the veil that covers your face. . . . (*He removes the veil. The statue's face appears, absolutely white, featureless and devoid of human expression.*) She has no face. . . . (*To the other ANCESTORS standing around them.*) Do you know her?

THE GREAT PEASANT

She has no expression.

THE GREAT MENDICANT

She has no features. . . . She is like an unfinished statue.

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

What are we to do? It must be she. But who is she? She is not dead, or we should know it. . . . Come, Tyltyl, make

The Betrothal;

an effort, for everything depends on you.
You must remember. . . .

TYLTYL

I have tried my utmost. . . . Do what
I will, I can't remember at all.

THE GREAT ANCESTOR

Listen, it is a serious matter. If we do not succeed in recognizing her, all your life, all your happiness on earth will be nothing more than a phantom like herself. . . . There is one last resource, one last hope, which is that the children who are to be born of you may discover who she is and that she is to be their mother. They see much farther and deeper than we. But there is no time to lose; for this waiting and this living in suspense are very dangerous for her. We must be quick therefore; we must not waste a moment . . .

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

go, my little Tytyl. You have been very good and patient, very obedient and faithful to your race throughout this ordeal. Take this kiss and farewell. . . . You too, my dears, let me give you the parting kiss. Do not be too sad; another happiness awaits you. There is more than one kind on that poor misguided earth of yours. You have deserved every happiness that it can give. . . . Good-bye, my dear daughters; good-bye, good-bye, my son. And we will meet again whenever you wish: you know where to find us and we shall be waiting for you. . . .

(The Scene grows dark and disappears from view; the Curtain of Rocks closes; and TYLYL, THE GIRLS, LIGHT and DESTINY are once more alone among the boulders.)

The Betrothal

DESTINY

(*Seizing TYLTYL's hand.*) This way, this way! . . . Thanks to me, it went off very well! . . . I said nothing about it; but it was I who foresaw everything and planned everything; and all that has been done was ordained by me. . . .

(*They all go out.*)

CURTAIN

ACT IV

ACT IV

SCENE VIII

*Before the Curtain representing the Milky
Way*

(Enter TYLTYL and LIGHT.)

TYLTYL

Where are we?

LIGHT

Near to the stars and yet within yourself. Before you is the great veil of the Milky Way. Beyond it stretches the region in which your unborn children are waiting to show you the mother whom they have chosen.

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

It's a little like the Kingdom of the Future in "The Blue Bird."

LIGHT

Perhaps; and yet not quite the same thing. There it was the whole kingdom, with everybody's children; here it is only a province, in which are no children but yours

TYLTYL

Have I many?

LIGHT

As many children as you have ancestors, as innumerable and no less infinite. But, as with the Ancestors, we shall see only those who are nearest to you, especially the youngest and smallest.

TYLTYL

Why the smallest?

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

LIGHT

Because they are nearest to their birth. As this approaches, they grow smaller and younger; so that the youngest, who are the first to be born, can hardly walk or stand.

TYLTYL

And the others? Are there any big ones?

LIGHT

There are children of all sizes, but I do not know that we shall see the biggest, that is to say, those who will be born hundreds or thousands of years hence. . . . There will not have been time to tell them; they do not keep close to the doors, like the very little ones, but wander far away waiting for their time to come.

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

They must find it very tiresome to be kept waiting like that!

LIGHT

(Nothing is ever tiresome in infinity.
Besides they have to learn here all that
they will forget on earth.)

TYLTYL

It seems hardly worth while then, to take so much trouble!

LIGHT

Oh, but it is! Something always remains and helps to build up the deep happiness of life.

TYLTYL

Well, so much the better for them! As for me, I shall soon know what I am to do. I hope we shall get through to-day,

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

because, you see, I'd like to have things settled. . . . But where on earth can they be, those girls of mine and Destiny? (*Looking below him, on the right.*) The poor little dears are up to their knees in the snow. This place is even higher and more difficult to get at than where the Ancestors lived.

LIGHT

(*Looking down.*) They are not very far away. . . . But you have taken off your hat again; that's a bad habit of yours. Put it on quickly, before they come, and be careful to make no mistake this time, for, if you do, the result may be very unpleasant.

(*TYLTYL puts on his hat and turns the sapphire. Forthwith from the earth and from every side little creatures of different sizes appear,*

The Betrothal;

dressed like him and resembling him in nearly every respect. They surround him, rush against him, hustle him and try to drag him, some to the right, others to the left, while he struggles in the midst of them without knowing to which he should give his attention.)

TYLTYL

(*Distraught.*) Hul-lo, hul-lo, what's all this? What does it mean? That sapphire really is becoming impossible!

LIGHT

Don't worry: you'll have turned it the wrong way again. What did you do?

TYLTYL

How can I tell? . . . This is getting too much for me! Too mixed up, really. . . . I must have pressed it instead of turning it.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

LIGHT

That's what I thought. You have simply released some of your other "You's."

TYLTYL

(*Dumbfounded.*) Some of my other "Me's"?

LIGHT

Yes, what I mean is that you are not alone inside yourself and that . . .

TYLTYL

(*More and more dumbfounded.*) I am not alone inside myself? . . .

LIGHT

Why, no, there are a number of other personalities there, more or less like you and all the time trying to get the upper hand.

TYLTYL

No, but really, what else is there inside

The Betrothal;

me? I must be a sort of menagerie or Noah's ark! There's no end to it!

LIGHT

That's true: there would be no end if we had the time to go into it all. . . . But press the sapphire down now and all will be well.

(TYLTYL *presses the sapphire and all his DOUBLES disappear.*)

TYLTYL

My word! A good riddance! . . . Well, as you say, they may be the least bit like me, but some of them are very ugly. Particularly a big dark one, who kept on tripping me up and very nearly made me fall.

LIGHT

Of course, there are some of all kinds, as in every man. One must learn to

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

choose the best and avoid the worst. . . .

But here come your little friends.

(*Enter first* THE WHITE PHANTOM.)

TYLTYL

(*Amazed.*) Hullo! . . . What's the matter with her? . . . She seems quite in a hurry to-day and moves like an angel.

(*Enter next* MILETTE, BELLINE, ROSELLE and ROSARELLE, followed by AIMETTE and JALLINE, who are supporting DESTINY between them. He is now a head shorter than TYLTYL, wears the same tragic costume as before, seems very weary and sinks down on a heap of snow.)

TYLTYL

(*Going to him, with a certain solicitude.*) Are you ill?

The Betrothal;

DESTINY

I? Not at all: I am always the same, I am unchangeable. . . . But when you alone are responsible for everything, when you have to manage everything, direct everything and foresee everything and when nobody helps you (*casting an aggressive eye on LIGHT*), you are entitled to a moment's rest. . . . I therefore order a halt. It is decided irrevocably: to-day we go no farther.

LIGHT

Admirable! And so it shall be, for we have arrived; and with Destiny's permission, we shall find ourselves, without taking another step, among the children who are awaiting us. . . .

(The curtain parts and opens upon the next scene.)

SCENE IX

The Abode of the Children

The immense halls, the lofty vaults, the infinite perspectives of arches and columns of the Kingdom of the Future in "The Blue Bird"; but this time, it being the nuptial hour, everything is of a soft, milky white, gleaming and transparent. The radiant shapes of amber-coloured light bathe in unspeakable gladness all the things that they touch; and everywhere are signs of a deep and unfaltering joy. The boundless horizon stretches towards the veiled white of the Milky Way, the ether quivering with myriads of unknown stars.

The Betrothal;

(When the curtain opens, TYLTYL, LIGHT, DESTINY and THE SIX GIRLS are in the foreground, on the right, at the foot of one of the alabaster columns supporting the entrance-arch. They take a few steps into the immense deserted hall, while THE WHITE PHANTOM hides timidly behind the column.)

TYLTYL

(A little disappointed.) There's nobody here! . . .

LIGHT

I know why it is. There are several doors; as you were all very tired, I chose the one that was nearest. They are probably waiting for us at the principal entrance.

TYLTYL

How shall we let them know?

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

LIGHT

The atmosphere will do that: here everything is known immediately and every event happens everywhere at the same moment.

TYLTYL

It's a very fine place, this: splendid large rooms and a very high ceiling; lots of light and air . . .

LIGHT

And it's still always inside yourself.

TYLTYL

What, this is inside me too?

LIGHT

Why, yes; of course it is.

TYLTYL

Very well, then; that's all right.

The Betrothal;

Please step in: you're very welcome.
Won't you sit down while you wait?

LIGHT

We shall not have long to wait, for I
believe they have seen us.

(A CHILD's head appears for an instant between two columns and is then briskly withdrawn, exclaiming, "This way! This way! They're here!" Soon after, seven or eight CHILDREN of about twelve years of age, in short white tunics, with bare arms, legs and feet, run up from the back of the hall and stop in front of the visitors. The largest holds out his hand to TYLTYL.)

THE CHILD

Good-evening, grandpapa!

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

TYLTYL

Grandpapa? . . . Who's that? . . .
Where is he? . .

THE CHILD

(*Bursting into laughter.*) Why, it's
you!

TYLTYL

(*Dumbfounded.*) I? Am I a grand-
papa already?

THE CHILD

Of course you are, eighty times over!
. . . We are the first to arrive. The
others are on their way. . . .(*To the other
CHILDREN.*) He doesn't seem to believe
it!

ANOTHER CHILD

You might give us a kiss.

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

(*Kissing them all.*) I will! I will!
. . . But how do I come to be a grand-
papa?

THE CHILD

Surely it's quite simple: you will be our
grandpapa when we are your grandchild-
ren.

TYLTYL

Obviously, that's clear. . . . So you
exist already?

THE CHILD

Naturally, since you yourself exist. . . .
I say, are those the grandmamas you're
bringing us?

TYLTYL

Yes; it seems you're to pick out the best
one.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

ANOTHER CHILD

(Clapping his hands and dancing for joy.) Oh, how pretty they are! . . .
(Throwing himself into JALLINE's arms.)
I take this one, because she is so soft! . . .

ANOTHER CHILD

(Throwing his arms round AIMETTE's neck.) And I this one, because she is so sad! . . .

ANOTHER CHILD

(Kissing ROSELLE.) I choose this one, because's she's always laughing! . . .

THREE OTHER CHILDREN

(Each taking one of the GIRLS, kissing and fondling her and laughing and skipping with delight.) And I choose this one, because she smells so nice! . . . I choose this one! . . . I choose this one! . . .

The Betrothal;

THE FIRST CHILD

(Intervening.) One moment, one moment, if you please. . . . This has nothing to do with us; our turn will come. You know that only the smallest have the right to choose who is to be their mother. All we have to do is to help them with our advice and to stop them if they make mistakes; but that's a thing which has never happened yet. They were quite some distance away, at the principal gate, but they won't be long now.

TYLTYL

Here come some bigger ones.

(Enter a new group of CHILDREN, apparently about fifteen years of age. The oldest goes to TYLTYL and shakes hands with him.)

THE OLDEST CHILD

Good-evening, great-grandfather! . . .

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

TYLTYL

Who's that? I? I'm a great-grand-father now! . . .

THE OLDEST CHILD

Of course you are! . . . I am very glad to see you for a minute, for we shall most likely not have the pleasure of meeting on earth. . . . Well, I understand that your visit to the Ancestors was not much of a success.

TYLTYL

Let's rather put it that they hadn't quite made up their minds. But how is it that you already know what happened there?

THE OLDEST CHILD

Why, of course we know everything that happens inside you; we're there ourselves. Besides, there's very little that separates

The Betrothal;

us from the Ancestors : our interests are the same and our paths often meet.

THE FIRST CHILD

Look out! Here are the little ones!
. . . I see five coming. . . There's only
one missing, the littlest. . .

*(From the back of the halls come five
LITTLE CHILDREN holding one an-
other's hands.)*

TYLTYL

Who are those five little ones? They
are very sweet.

THE FIRST CHILD

Why, they are your children: two boys
and three girls!

TYLTYL

Mine? Shall I have five children?

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

THE FIRST CHILD

Six, you will have six, for the last little one isn't here yet. . . . I promise you, the world can do with them, after what people have been up to, down there! . . .

TYLTYL

But I shall never be able to feed them all! . . .

(THE FIVE LITTLE ONES, *still holding hands, have stopped in front of THE SIX GIRLS and stand looking at them solemnly, without speaking. By degrees, the halls have become filled with a host of other CHILDREN who gather round THE FIVE LITTLE ONES and watch them. The silence at last becomes irksome and TYLTYL breaks it.*)

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

Well, children, aren't you going to kiss your papa?

THE YOUNGEST CHILD

(*Ordering him with a serious gesture to be silent.*) Mamma first. . . . Where is she?

TYLTYL

Why, she must be here; she's one of those. You have only to choose.

THE YOUNGEST CHILD

(*To the one beside him.*) Do you see her?

THE OTHER

(*Shaking his head sadly.*) No.

THE THREE OTHERS

(*In succession.*) No more do I. . . .
No more do I. . . . No more do I. . . .

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

JALLINE

(Rushing forward, catching hold of one of the CHILDREN and kissing him.) But that's impossible! . . . Here, look at me? . . . Don't you see how much I'll love you? . . .

THE CHILD

Yes, but you're not the one.

ROSELLE

(Taking another CHILD on her knees.) And me? Won't you have me for your mamma?

THE CHILD

No, no, it's not you.

ROSARELLE

(Catching hold of another CHILD.) And me? Don't you love me? You'll see how happy we shall be! . . . We shall

The Betrothal;

have a lovely house full of toys and I shall
give you everything you want. . . .

THE CHILD

(Vainly trying to contain its tears.)
No, no! . . .

BELLINE

(Taking THE YOUNGEST.) Look here,
you seem to know more than the others.
. . . Don't you recognize me? . . . Are
you fond of sweets? . . .

THE YOUNGEST CHILD

*(Struggling until she lets him go and
crying without disguise.)* Let me go!
Let me go!

TYLTYL

Here's a pretty business! He's crying!
. . . And the other one as well! . . . But

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

what do they want? . . . They're very hard to please. . . .

(THE YOUNGEST CHILD *wipes his eyes and takes the hand of the next, who does the same by his neighbour, until they all hold hands again.*)

THE YOUNGEST CHILD

Come! . . .

(THE FIVE LITTLE CHILDREN *move away, with staid dignity, and go out on the left.*)

TYLTYL

What's the matter with them? Where are they going?

ONE OF THE BIG CHILDREN

They are going to the other door.

The Betrothal;

ANOTHER

They are going to fetch the smallest of them all.

ANOTHER

The smaller they are, the more they know.

THE FIRST CHILD

But where is he, the smallest one?
Haven't you seen him?

ANOTHER

No, no one has seen him since this morning. . . . It's strange, for he is always with his little sisters.

TYLTYL

(*Looking at the throng of CHILDREN filling the halls.*) How many there are!

ONE OF THE BIG CHILDREN

It's only one part of the family.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

A CHILD

*(Which has been following the progress
of THE FIVE CHILDREN with his eyes.)*
They are stopping at the third door.

TYLTYL

Who?

THE CHILD

The five little ones.

ANOTHER CHILD

They seem to be looking for something.

THE FIRST CHILD

Let us go and see what they're doing.
They know what they know.

OTHER CHILDREN

Yes, yes, let us all go. . . . They know,
they know!

(A great stir in the crowd of CHILD-

The Betrothal;

REN. *They all run in the same direction and go out on the left. In a moment the hall is emptied of all except TYLTYL, LIGHT, THE SIX GIRLS and DESTINY.)*

TYLTYL

Let us go after them too!

(He goes out, followed by LIGHT and THE SIX GIRLS, with DESTINY bringing up the rear. The only occupant of the stage is THE WHITE PHANTOM, whom everybody has overlooked and who has never left the column on the right against which she has been leaning. The stage remains empty for a moment and then, from the back of the halls, comes a CHILD even smaller than the youngest of THE FIVE LITTLE ONES. He walks with reso-

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

lute step; on reaching the columns in the foreground, he appears to take his bearings, turns his head to right and left and then, suddenly, goes straight to THE WHITE PHANTOM, in front of whom he stops and takes up his stand, contemplating her at length, gravely and silently, with his finger in his mouth. At last he puts out one hand and takes THE PHANTOM by the hem of her dress.)

THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL
Is it . . . really you?

THE PHANTOM

(Speaking for the first time and struggling to find her voice, which seems to come from far away and to stick in her throat.)
Yes.

The Betrothal;

THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL
I knew it. Come. . . .

THE PHANTOM
Where to?

THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL
Over here. . . . I'm going to tell the
others. . . .

THE PHANTOM
Not yet. . . . I can't yet. . . .

THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL
*(Still dragging her by her dress towards
a marble bench which stands between the
columns in the foreground.)* Come. . . .
*(He makes her sit down, settles her on
the bench, caresses her and kisses her.)*
Come . . . it's you. . . . I knew it. . . .
I'm kissing you. . . . Don't you know how
to kiss yet? (THE PHANTOM *shakes her*

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

head.) No? . . . Like this. . . . I'll teach you. . . . (*He kisses and caresses her slowly and deliberately.*) You're no longer cold?

THE PHANTOM

(*Smiling at last.*) No.

THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL

(*Still kissing her.*) You see, that's better already.

(*Under THE CHILD's kisses and caresses, THE STATUE has gradually taken life: the eyes open, the lips flutter, the face begins to colour, the body loses its terrible stiffness, the arms become supple and circle round the CHILD's neck.*)

THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL

(*Nestling against her.*) You're better,

The Betrothal;

aren't you? . . . Not sleepy any more?
. . . How good it is, being together! . . .
They're still looking for you, you know.
. . . And it's I who found you! . . . I
knew, I knew. . . .

THE PHANTOM

So did I, so did I. . . . I was wait-
ing. . . .

THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL

It's splendid, isn't it? . . . (*Nestling
more closely.*) Oh, such fun! . . . Do
you like it too?

THE PHANTOM

Yes. . . . Yes, I am happy.

THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL

Why aren't you laughing?

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

THE PHANTOM

Because I am too happy.

THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL

So am I, so am I! . . . Don't look: I'm going to cry a little, but it doesn't mean anything. . . .

THE PHANTOM

(*Beginning to return his kisses and caresses.*) I'm going to cry too.

THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL

(*Intoxicated with rapture.*) You're kissing me! . . . Mummy! . . . Then it's true, then it's true, it is you! . . . Again, again! . . . No, not any more: I can't bear it! . . . Will they understand, will they be able to understand?

THE PHANTOM

Call them, it is time.

The Betrothal;

THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL

Don't cover your face: they wouldn't see it and they wouldn't believe me. . . .

(Drawing aside the veils.) Oh, mummy, how lovely you are! . . . *(Her hair spreads all over her shoulders.)* Oh, mummy, your hair! . . . What lots of it! . . . There, that's much better, I can kiss you better so. . . . *(Listening.)* Listen, they're coming back! They're here!

(THE FIVE LITTLE ONES come rushing headlong into the hall.)

THE FIVE LITTLE ONES

Where is she? . . . Where is she? . . . Where is she? . . .

THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL

(Standing up on the bench, beside his MOTHER, showing her to the others and dancing with delight.) Here! Here!

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

. . . She's here, she's here! . . . I found her! . . .

(THE MOTHER *tries to rise and take them in her arms, but they do not give her time. They fling themselves upon her, load her with kisses and caresses, make her sit down again and clamber on her knees, swarming and scrambling over her and all speaking together.*)

THE FIVE LITTLE ONES

It's she! . . . It's she! . . . It's mummy! . . . Where was she? . . . Did you know her? . . . I should think so! I should think so! . . . You too? Yes, I too, I too! . . . You're taking up all the room! . . . You're kissing her all the time! . . . It's not fair, it's my turn! . . . She's my mummy too! . . . We

The Betrothal;

looked for you so hard! . . . We waited
for you so long! . . . She is lovely, isn't
she? . . . She's the loveliest of them all!
. . . There's no one like her! . . . Tell
us, tell us! . . . What? . . . I love you!
Do you love me? . . . Kiss, kiss, kiss,
kiss! . . . What sweet things mummies
are! . . . How delicious it is to kiss!
. . . To think one didn't know! . . . All
for us, all for us! . . . The only happi-
ness! . . . You're everything in the world
to us, we're everything in the world to you!
. . . I dote on you! . . . I say, do you
know me? I shall be the second. . . .
And I the third. . . . And I the last! . . .
Kiss me first, I shall have the longest to
wait! . . . She's laughing! . . . She's
happy too! . . . Answer us, speak to us!
. . . Your arm, I want to feel your arm
round my neck! . . . Mine too, mine too!
. . . Don't go away, whatever you do!

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

. . . We don't know where we are, we're mad with delight! . . . We can't wait any longer! . . .

(While they are thus kissing and talking, the other, BIGGER CHILDREN, those of the future generations, gradually return and fill the halls again. The first arrivals stop behind the group formed by THE MOTHER and THE SIX LITTLE ONES; and whispers are heard and rise from the growing crowd:
"They've found her! . . . They've found her! . . . It's she! . . . How happy they are! . . . How beautiful she is! . . . How kind she looks! . . . Can we kiss her? . . . Wait, wait, it's their turn now! . . . Ours will come! . . ."
TYLTYL, followed by LIGHT, THE SIX GIRLS and DESTINY, now enters



The Betrothal;

the hall. THE CHILDREN fall back to let him pass. THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL sees him first, goes to him and, taking him by the hand, leads him to THE MOTHER.)

THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL
(*Gravely.*) It is she. . . . I found her. . . .

(THE MOTHER *rises and stands in front of TYLTYL.*)

ANOTHER LITTLE ONE

Do you recognize her?

(TYLTYL *hesitates, passes his hand over his forehead, vainly searches his memory.*)

TYLTYL

Not yet. . . . She's beautiful!



or, The Blue Bird Chooses

ANOTHER LITTLE ONE

Kiss her; it's she.

ANOTHER LITTLE ONE

There is no other.

THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL

We want no other.

TYLTYL

(*Taking THE MOTHER's hand.*) Where
do you come from? . . . Who are you?
. . . Where have I seen you before? . . .
I can't remember. . . .

(THE MOTHER *does not reply. Her
colour comes and goes, her eyes
open and shut, her life fluctuates
with the ebb and flow of the me-
mory which she strives to awaken.*)

THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL

Take care! You're hurting her!

The Betrothal;

(THE OTHER LITTLE ONES *form a line in front of her as though to defend her.*)

A LITTLE ONE

Go away!

ANOTHER LITTLE ONE

Go away! You sha'n't have her until
you know her!

ANOTHER LITTLE ONE

You sha'n't have any other!

ANOTHER LITTLE ONE

Go away! She shall stay with us till
you know!

ANOTHER LITTLE ONE

Go away! We'll wait for you; we shall
all be down there!

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

THE FIRST LITTLE ONE

Go away, go away! . . . You're hurting her dreadfully!

THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL

(*Embracing his* MOTHER.) Come, mummy, come! . . . He doesn't know yet! . . .

(*They all gather and press closely round their MOTHER, hurrying and dragging her along and waving good-bye to TYLTYL: "See you soon! See you soon again! . . . Down there, down there! . . . See you soon!" . . . THE MOTHER turns and gazes fixedly at TYLTYL; then the outlines of the hall darken, lose their colour and distinctness, dissolve and disappear. Only TYLTYL, LIGHT, DESTINY and THE SIX GIRLS remain in front of the*

The Betrothal

Curtain representing the Milky Way.)

TYLTYL

Well, I'm in a nice mess! . . . What am I to do? . . . Is it my fault if I can't remember? . . .

LIGHT

Don't be afraid. They know what they are saying. You will find her again. . . . Let us go, quickly! . . . I am sure that she is waiting for you where you least expect her.

TYLTYL

(Dreamily.) She really is beautiful! . . . I believe they are right. . . . I believe it's really she. . . .

(They all go out.)

CURTAIN

ACT V

1

1

ACT V

SCENE X

*Before the Curtain representing the Edge
of a Forest*

(Enter TYLTYL and LIGHT.)

LIGHT

Here we are at last.

TYLTYL

Where?

LIGHT

Why, near your home! . . . Don't you
recognize your forest?

TYLTYL

My forest, my forest? . . . (*Looking*

The Betrothal;

around him.) Why, so it is! . . . I've seen those beeches before, somewhere.

LIGHT

That's more than likely, as they're close to the house in which you were born.

TYLTYL

Well, it's about time I did get home. I am tired out.

LIGHT

It has been a fatiguing journey, but not without results.

TYLTYL

Results? . . . Where? . . . When we started I was in love with six girls; now we've returned, I love only one; and she's just the one who hasn't come back with me. . . . But where are those six others and what are they doing? And Destiny too? He was looking very ill. . . .

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

LIGHT

Here they are.

(*Enter THE SIX GIRLS. The last, JALLINE, carries DESTINY, who still wears his cloak and sombrero, but who has shrunk to the dimensions of quite a small child and appears very tired.*)

JALLINE

(*Passing DESTINY to MILETTE.*) Will you take him for a moment? He's not very big, but dreadfully heavy.

MILETTE

(*Taking him from JALLINE's arms.*) Come to me, my little Tiny, come; there, don't cry. . . .

DESTINY

(*In a whining baby voice.*) Me? I never cwy! . . . I'm alwayth the thame!

The Betrothal;

. . . I'm unthakable, immovable, indefatigable, implacable and inegthowable! . . .

MILETTE

Yes, yes, Tiny, we know, you're a very good little boy. . . . (DESTINY *falls asleep in her arms.*) He's gone to sleep!

JALLINE

(*Wrapping him in his cape, with a motherly gesture.*) He's a dear, sweet, obedient little thing, but seems very tired.

LIGHT

Poor little Destiny! . . . He has no luck! . . . But we will see to him later. . . . What we have to do now, my children, is to bid one another good-bye . . . and for the last time. . . .

TYLTYL

For the last time! . . .

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

LIGHT

Why, yes; we can't spend our whole life travelling! Besides, you are near your homes, since you all of you dwell round the forest. We have learned what we sought and we know what we wanted to know, that man is granted only one love, while the others are merely unfortunate errors that bring sorrow to innumerable lives. . . . You were all of you about to choose wrongly; and you may rejoice, therefore, even now, when we have to part, that the mistake was discovered before it was too late. . . . And, more than this, the Fairy has charged me with glad tidings for you all: the one love you have each of you sought is waiting for you by your own fire-side, in your own home, or at least will be there very soon. . . . So do not linger, but hasten to meet it. . . . The hour grows late; soon the cocks will be crowing;

The Betrothal;

the birds are beginning to wake. Let us bid one another good-bye, quickly, without regret, without sad thoughts or tears. . . .

MILETTE

(*Handing DESTINY to AIMETTE.*)

Just take him for a minute, while I kiss Tytyl. . . . (*Kissing TYLTYL.*) Good-bye, Tytyl dear. I must go first. Dad gets up early and there would be awful trouble if he didn't find me in the house. Good-bye. Let me kiss you again. . . . Be nice to me when we meet: we're neighbours and shall have to spend all our lives in this forest.

TYLTYL

(*Kissing her affectionately.*) Be nice to you, Milette? Of course I will! It's not your fault or mine: we both know that.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

MILETTE

Good-bye, good-bye! . . . I must fly! . . .

(She runs out.)

AIMETTE

(Handing DESTINY to JALLINE.)

Take hold of the little man for a second, will you? *(Kissing TYLTYL.)* Good-bye, Tytyl. . . . Don't let us forget each other. . . . I shall perhaps love somebody else; but I shall never love him as I loved you.

LIGHT

Come, come, you are wasting time. . . . We shall never have done if we go on like this. . . . If the cock crows before you return, your parents will know everything; and then they'll be angry. . . . Just give him a sisterly kiss: that's all that's necessary. . . . You're not going far; and

The Betrothal;

you'll meet again many a time, in real life,
and will like each other the better because
of your truer knowledge. . . .

(ROSARELLE *and* BELLINE *kiss* TYL-
TYL *without speaking and go out.*
ROSELLE *blows her nose vigor-*
ously, dabs at her eyes and stam-
mers, "My dear Tytyl! My
dear Tytyl! . . . He was so
nice! . . . I shall see you again,
sha'n't I, I shall see you again?
. . . You shall have the best of
everything at the inn!" *Then she*
rushes out. JALLINE *alone lingers*
behind, holding DES~NY in her
arms.)

LIGHT

Well, Jalline, what are you doing
here?

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

JALLINE

I can't go away at once, just like the others! . . .

LIGHT

But you must, dear Jalline. Not because it is fate, as men say, but because it is the will of those who know everything and who never die. . . . Good-bye, my little Jalline. You have been very sweet, very loving, very exquisite; and I thought that you would be chosen. . . . Don't cry, dear. Hand over poor little Destiny to me, I will take care of him; and give Tylyl a long, long kiss. . . .

JALLINE

(*Hands DESTINY to LIGHT and gives TYLTYL a long kiss.*) Good-bye, Tylyl.

TYLTYL

Good-bye, Jalline!

The Betrothal;

(JALLINE *moves away with slow reluctant steps.*)

LIGHT

And, now that we are alone, let me kiss you too. . . . We shall meet once again to take another and a longer journey. . . .

TYLTYL

Another journey? And a longer one?

LIGHT

The last, the happiest and the most beautiful. But I am not allowed to speak of it yet. . . . Good-bye, Tytyl. Remember, dear, that you are not alone in this world and that all that you see in it has neither beginning nor end. With this thought in your heart, letting it grow with your growth, you will always know, whatever may happen, the right thing to say, the

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

right thing to hope for. . . . And you,
Tiny, don't cry like that! Some day we
shall begin to understand each other.

DESTINY

(Half-asleep, tearfully, lisping.) Me?
I never cwy! . . . I order a thtop! . . .
Forward! Forward! Forward!

*(LIGHT goes out on the left, carrying
DESTINY in her arms. TYLTYL
follows her a little way, waving his
hand in farewell; and the Curtain
opens on the last scene.)*

SCENE XI

The Awakening

The same scene as in Act I. TYLTYL is sound asleep. The light trickles gaily through all the crannies of the closed shutters. The Blue Bird is singing madly in his cage.

(A knock at the door.)

TYLTYL

(Waking with a start.) Who's there?

MUMMY TYL

(Behind the door.) It's me! . . .
Open the door quickly! . . . We're expecting a visitor. . . .

TYLTYL

Wait, wait, till I slip on my breeches.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

. . . (*Rising and seeing with amazement that he is dressed.*) Hullo, I've gone to bed with my clothes on! How did I come to do that? . . .

(*He opens the door. Enter MUMMY TYL fussily, carrying a bundle of sticks.*)

MUMMY TYL

Quick, quick! . . . Help me light the fire and tidy the room. . . . Go and wake up Mytyl. . . . They'll be here in a minute.

TYLTYL

(*Doing his best to help her.*) Who's "they"?

MUMMY TYL

Of course, you don't know. Daddy Tyl met them yesterday, but you had gone to bed. . . . Do open the shutters, I can't see what I'm doing. . . . (TYLTYL *opens*

The Betrothal;

the shutters and the daylight floods the room.) And call Mytyl, so that she can help me to get things straight. . . . What a mess! . . . And the dust! I can't let them see my house like this. (*Enter MYTYL.*)

TYLTYL

Hullo, there Mytyl is! . . . But you haven't told me. . . .

MUMMY TYL

(*To MYTYL.*) The fire's beginning to burn up. . . . You make the coffee, while I start cleaning. . . . What's this? More cabbage leaves under the tap!

MYTYL

It's not my fault. Tytyl promised me . . .

MUMMY TYL

Well, I never! A nice thing! . . . It's

or, The Blue Bird Chooses
a blessing that I came to look for myself!
. . . Take the broom, Tytyl, while I give
a rub to the plates and put them away.

TYLTYL

But look here: who's coming? Is it the
Shah of Persia or the Emperor of China?

MUMMY TYL

Much better than that. You'll never
guess. . . . Do you remember our neighbour?

MYTYL

What neighbour?

MUMMY TYL

There aren't so many of 'em. . . . The
one with the pretty little pink house, by the
road-side, and a garden full of sunflowers
and hollyhocks.

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

Of course! . . . And they had a little girl to whom I gave my dove?

MUMMY TYL

That's right.

TYLTYL

They've been gone a long time.

MUMMY TYL

Five or six years, that's all. They went to the town to live with the girl's uncle. He was a widower, with no children of his own, and has died and left them all his money. They told Daddy Tyl they're coming back here for good, going into their nice little house again. It belonged to little Joy's uncle.

TYLTYL

Little Joy?

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

MUMMY TYL

Yes, yes, you know: that's the little girl's name. They used to call her Jojo when she was small; but her name is Joy. Daddy Tyl met her last night, says that he could hardly believe his eyes, that she's taller than you and beautiful . . . well, there! With hair like gold, real gold! That's worth thinking about. . . . So I want the house tidy and all of us to look decent and respectable. . . . You can never tell what may happen. We're of good stock too. Your grandfather's father was a pork-butcher.

TYLTYL

It's curious, I didn't meet him.

MUMMY TYL

Whom?

The Betrothal;

TYLTYL

My grandfather's father.

MUMMY TYL

That's not to be wondered at: he's been
dead these fifty-seven years.

TYLTYL

(Sweeping the floor lustily.) Perhaps
I had better put on my Sunday clothes?

MUMMY TYL

No, you needn't; you're all right as you
are. We'll just lay the white tablecloth.
. . . Besides, there's no time now; here
they come; I can hear them walking up the
path.

*(A knock at the door. MUMMY TYL
opens it. Enter THE NEIGHBOUR
and JOY, followed by DADDY TYL,
with his axe on his shoulder.)*

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

DADDY TYL

(Calling out from the threshold.)

Here they are! Here they are!

THE NEIGHBOUR

Yes, it's Joy and I, Madame Tyl. . . .
Good-morning, a Merry Christmas and
good luck to everybody, as my poor husband used to say when he was alive. I'm glad to see you looking so well. . . .
And these are the children? Don't tell me that this great, big, pretty girl is Mytyl? And can that be Tytyl, that strapping young fellow who looks so smart?

MUMMY TYL

Yes, yes, Madame Berlingot, they're the sort that keep on shooting up till you don't know where you are. Tytyl hasn't grown as much as his sister; but he's stronger. There's not a sturdier lad in all the coun-

The Betrothal;

try-side. . . . But it's your young lady who's beautiful! . . . She looks the very picture of the blessed saints! . . . (*Observing TYLTYL, who stands wide-eyed and entranced.*) Now then, Tytyl, where are your manners? Don't you know your little playmate? Be civil, say how-do-you-do, shake hands and give her a chair.

DADDY TYL

Before you sit down, would you like to see the cows?

THE NEIGHBOUR

What, do you keep cows now?

DADDY TYL

Why, yes; we've not done so badly either. . . . Two little cows and a calf. . . . Little cows are better than big ones; and they only eat half as much. . . . One

or, The Blue Bird Chooses
of them, the red one, gives us twenty quarts
of milk every day.

THE NEIGHBOUR

Then you've put up a cow-house? You
hadn't one before.

DADDY TYL

Yes, I ran it up myself, with Tylyl to
help. . . . (*Leading her towards the door
on the left.*) It's this way: we made a
good job of it and it's quite worth seeing.

THE NEIGHBOUR

Dear me, yes; I'd like to see it at once.

(*They all go out, except TYLTYL and
JOY, who remain standing face to
face. As soon as they are gone,
TYLTYL goes up to JOY and takes
her hand.*)

TYLTYL

Is it . . . really you?

The Betrothal;

JOY

Yes, it's I.

TYLTYL

I knew you at once.

JOY

And I you.

TYLTYL

You are even more beautiful than up there.

JOY

You too.

TYLTYL

I say, it's funny that I couldn't remember. . . .

JOY

I hadn't forgotten.

TYLTYL

Oh, how lovely you are! . . . Let me kiss you.

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

JOY

You may if you like.

(They kiss each other awkwardly, but affectionately.)

TYLTYL

They haven't a suspicion.

JOY

You think that?

TYLTYL

I'm sure of it. They don't know what we know. But the little ones knew.

JOY

What little ones?

TYLTYL

The little ones up there. . . . They were very clever. They knew you at once. . . . Were you so very unhappy?

The Betrothal;

Joy

Why?

TYLTYL

Because I couldn't remember.

Joy

It wasn't your fault.

TYLTYL

I know, but I hated it. . . . And you were so pale, so dreadfully pale; and you never spoke. . . . How long had you loved me?

Joy

Ever since I first saw you, when you gave me the Blue Bird.

TYLTYL

So have I, so have I, but I had forgotten. . . . Never mind: we're going to be

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

tremendously happy, for they've settled it,
you see; they want it.

Joy

Do you think they've done it on purpose?

TYLTYL

I'm quite sure; there isn't a doubt. . . .
Everybody wanted it, but especially the
little ones, all six of them.

Joy

Oh!

TYLTYL

Yes! . . . We're going to have six!
. . . I say, do you believe it?

Joy

Six what?

TYLTYL

Why, six children, of course!

The Betrothal;

JOY

Oh, Tylyl!

TYLTYL

I know it's a great many; but we'll manage somehow. There's nothing to be afraid of. . . . What a dream, eh?

JOY

Yes.

TYLTYL

The loveliest I ever had; and you?

JOY

Yes.

TYLTYL

I saw you as you are now, just like that. But here, all the same, you are more real and more beautiful. . . . Oh, I must kiss you again!

(They kiss each other lingeringly.

At that moment DADDY TYL opens

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

the door, with the others behind him.)

DADDY TYL

(Catching them in the act.) Well, I never! . . . You're getting on, you two! . . . You're losing no time!

THE NEIGHBOUR

(Entering with MUMMY TYL and MY-TYL.) What's the matter?

DADDY TYL

What did I say, when we were looking at the rabbits? These two are made for each other. . . . They were kissing away like anything!

THE NEIGHBOUR

Joy! Aren't you ashamed?

Joy

But, mummy . . .

The Betrothal;

DADDY TYL

Come, come, there's no great harm in it.
We did as much, Mummy Tyl and I, when
we were young, didn't we, old lady?

MUMMY TYL

We did indeed! . . . They make such
a pretty pair! . . .

THE NEIGHBOUR

That they do; but Joy is still very young
and I'd like to think it over.

DADDY TYL

That's right enough. . . . He's very
young too; but you won't find a better boy
in the whole country-side. . . . He's a
strong, healthy lad, with a civil tongue in
his head, and he works like a nigger. . . .
Think it over by all means, only, as this is
a holiday, there's no harm in their kissing
each other; and let's see them do it: it's

or, The Blue Bird Chooses

good for one! . . . (*Seeing that TYLTYL and JOY do not move, he pushes them close together.*) Well? . . . Look at them: they don't want to now!

TYLTYL

(*In a whisper, to JOY, as he kisses her.*)
It was better when we were by ourselves,
wasn't it?

JOY

(*Also whispering.*) Yes, it was!

TYLTYL

They were right, weren't they?

JOY

Who?

TYLTYL

The others.

JOY

Yes.

